

Early Career Teachers: The Story So Far

Since September 2021 schools have dealt with the most significant shake-up to the way teachers join the profession since teaching qualifications became mandatory in the 1970s.

Enter: The Early Career Framework.

The [Early Career Framework](#) (ECF) requires any school inducting new teachers to offer a two-year package of high-quality professional development – an increase on the previous one year induction period.

The [Framework](#) itself outlines “the best available evidence of what teachers should know and be able to do” and is designed to underpin the induction period. In-school mentors must also help new teachers to translate it into classroom practice, and teachers are given reduced timetables in both their first and second year in school.

Early Career Teachers (ECTs) have two formal assessments: one at the end of each induction year, supported by progress reviews in each term where there isn’t a formal assessment.

The reforms aim to improve the training opportunities available to ECTs and improve recruitment and retention, as well as deter newly qualified teachers from leaving the profession.

That was the plan. How is it going?

Almost everyone broadly welcomed the ECF idea. But here at Teacher Tapp we’ve heard grumbings.

And given that our mission is to tell the story of what’s really happening on the ground in schools, we wanted to use YOUR voices to explain the situation..

At the end of the first full school term for Early Career Teachers (ECTs), we therefore used Twitter to check what we should be asking about. Then we put your questions to ECTs, mentors and school leaders.

This blog looks at what we found one term in...

Dissatisfaction with materials and training

Schools are allowed to design and deliver their own ECF-based induction. There is also the option to use a funded DfE-accredited provider-led programme or to use the DfE-accredited materials and resources as part of a school's own training programme.

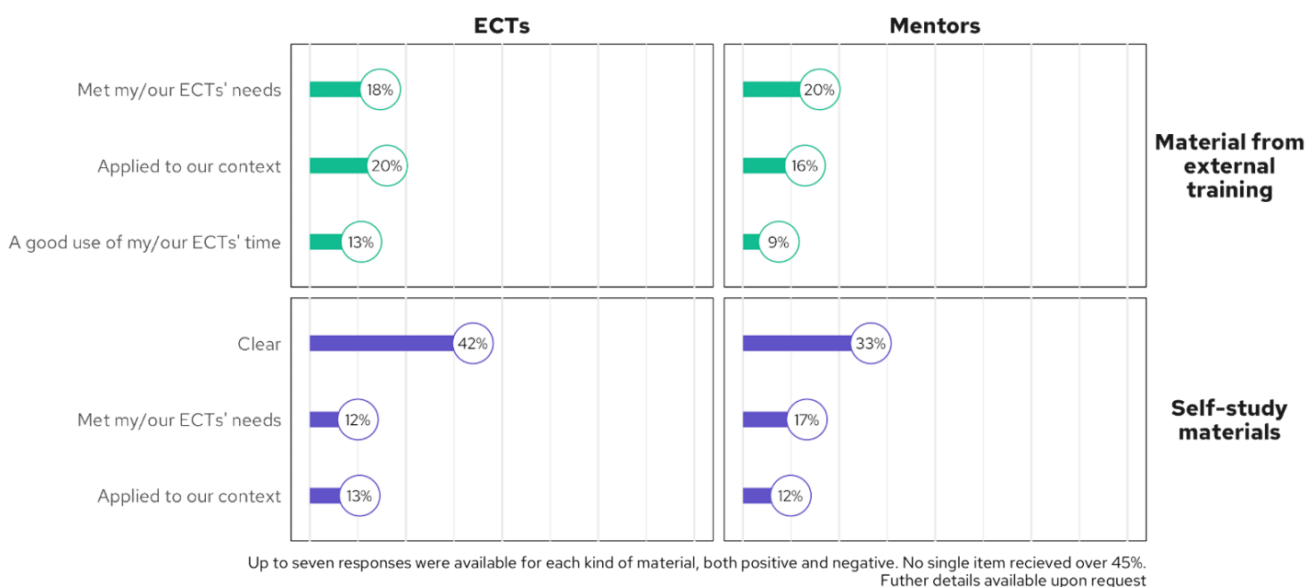
[DfE figures](#) show 25,119 ECTs started the full induction programme since the national roll-out of ECF, each supported by one of 22,956 mentors who have received training. Around ¾ of mentors are using a DfE-accredited provider-led programme, including using their materials and resources.

However, neither ECTs nor mentors seem happy with the materials and training they've encountered in their first term. One of the main challenges is that self-study materials are not applied to different contexts and are not sufficiently flexible.

Damningly, only 14% of ECTs and 9% of mentors think that the training received as part of the ECF so far is a good use of time.

Which of the following describes the materials you have received as part of the ECF?

Question answered by 268 early career teachers (ECTs) and 505 teachers who are mentors to early career teachers (ECTs) this year



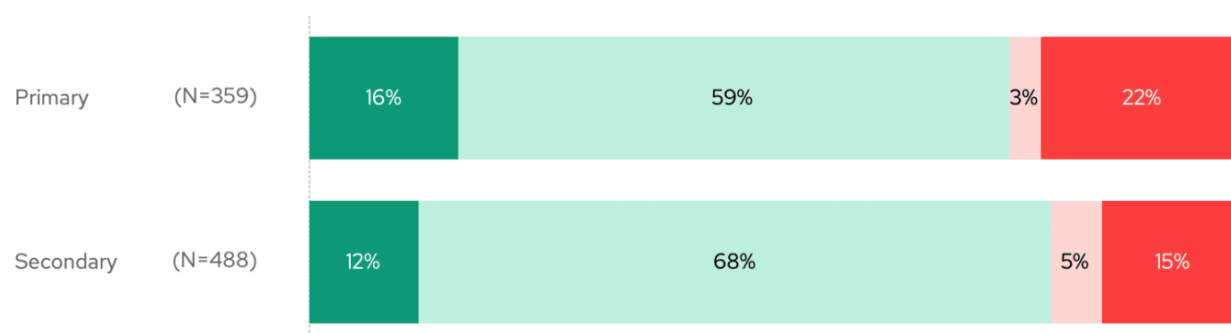
Speaking of a good use of time...

57% of ECTs agree or strongly agree that the ECF adds a lot to their workload.

The proportion is even higher amongst mentors: 65% said the programme adds too much to their workload and 63% said it adds too much to ECTs' workloads.

Nearly half of mentors (46%) report that they have not been given additional non-contact time to work with ECTs. This fact is corroborated in around 20% of cases by senior leaders who admit they have not given ECT mentors additional time for their role (schools adopting the provider-led induction model receive additional funding to cover backfill for 36 hours of mentor training over a two-year period)

Have you given ECT mentors additional time for their role?



Question answered by 847 school leaders (members of the SLT and headteachers) on 01/03/2022

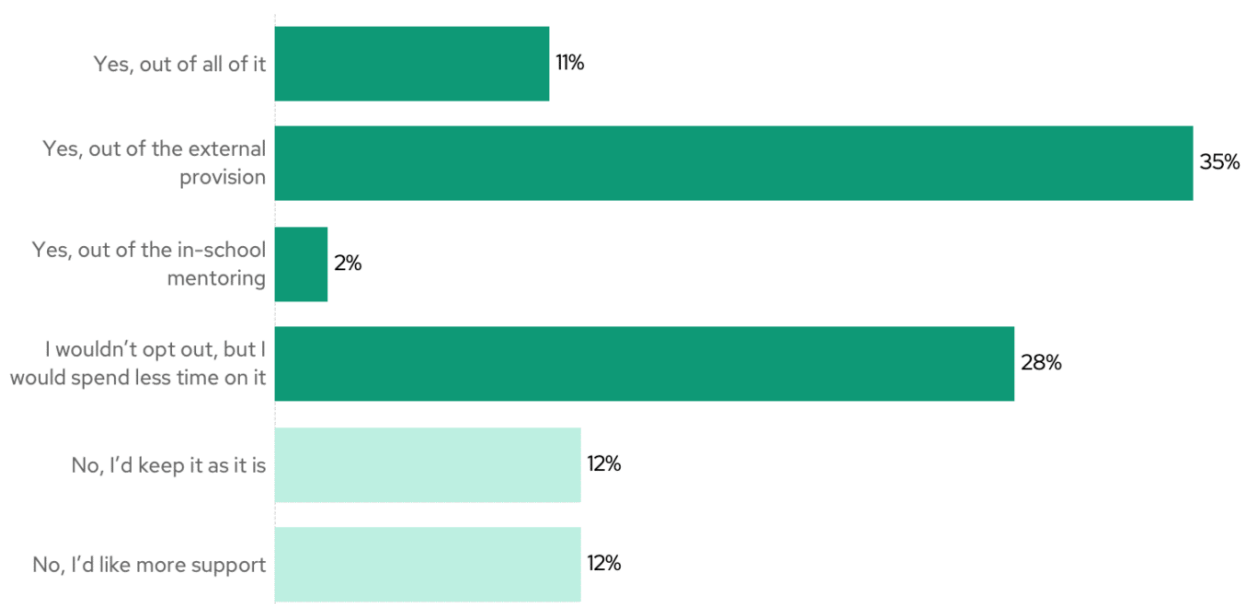
■ Yes, we've given them more time than expected
 ■ Yes, we've given them less time than expected
■ Yes, we've given the time expected by the guidelines
 ■ No

There must be some good things, though? Yes!

On the upside, ECTs really like their in-school mentors. Only 2% specifically said they'd opt out of the in-school mentoring support they receive.

And while only 12% of ECTs would keep the programme as is, only 11% say they'd opt out of the ECT programme altogether.

Given the choice, I would opt out of the support I'm getting as an Early Career Teacher.



Question answered by 246 Early Career Teachers (ECTs) on 22/02/2022

Around a quarter of mentors (23%) reported that the ECF programme has made them better at mentoring, and 14% say it has made them a better teacher. Whilst not overwhelming, this does mean over 3,000 teachers now feel they are better at their job.

So aside from the materials, the training and the workload (!) What is the problem?

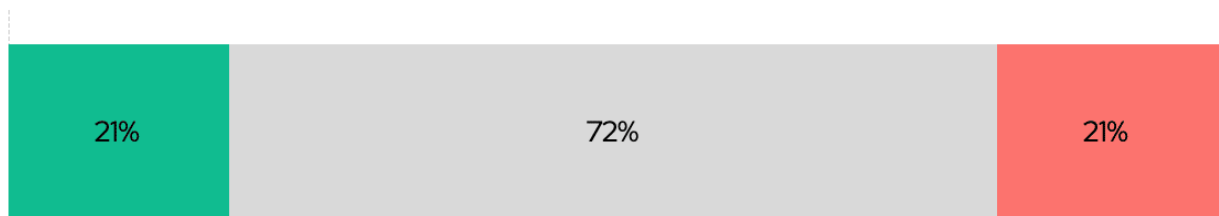
A fundamental problem is that, so far, neither ECTs nor mentors seem convinced that the programme is actually helping new teachers learn.

64% of ECTs disagree or strongly disagree that they have learned a lot from the ECF.

Only 30% report that the support they're getting (in and out of school) makes them a better teacher.

And whilst 21% say that it will make them more likely to stay in teaching, exactly the same proportion say that it will make them less likely to stay! As a programme that's designed to improve retention this is something the Department for Education will want to improve.

Overall, the Early Career Teacher support I'm getting (in and out of school) makes me:



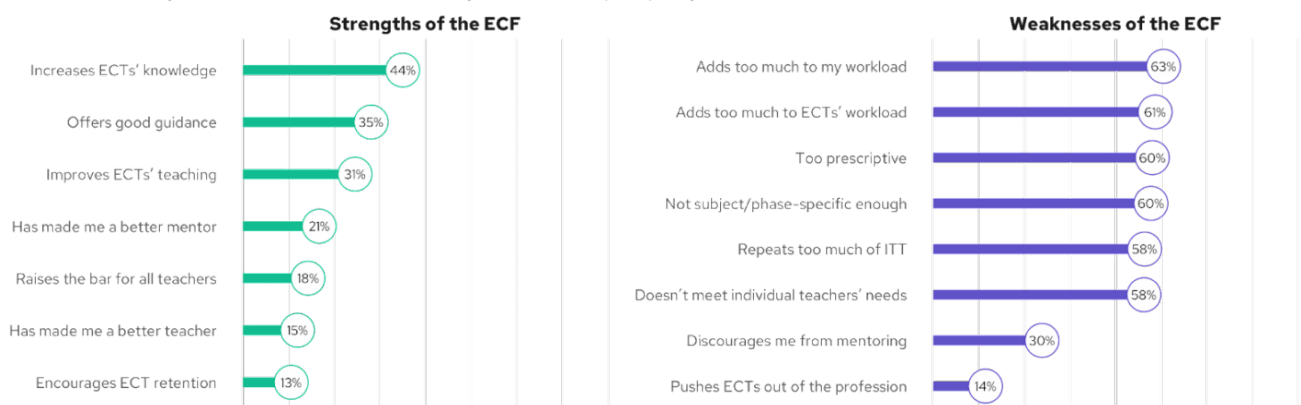
Question answered by 249 Early Career Teachers (ECTs) on 22/02/2022

- More likely to stay in teaching
- Neither more nor less likely to stay in teaching
- Less likely to stay in teaching

From the mentors' point of view, 41% say it has increased ECTs knowledge, BUT, 50% said it repeats too much of ITT, is not subject/phase-specific enough, is too prescriptive and does not meet individual teachers' needs.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Early Career Framework?

Question answered by 1,041 teachers who are mentors to early career teachers (ECTs) this year



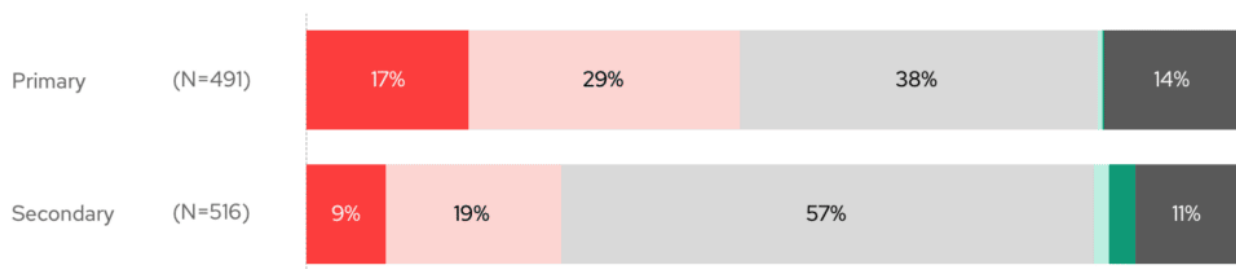
Responders were given seven pre-determined responses, as well as a 'None of the above' options, which is not shown here.

And the future doesn't look too bright either ■■

One of the problems with a poor experience this year is the risk that schools will not want more ECTs next year.

Over a third of school leaders (39%) said that they'll take fewer ECTs in future due to the impact of the reforms. This will particularly affect teachers looking to start a career in primary schools, as nearly half of primary leaders (46%) said they'll take fewer ECTs in future, compared to just under a third of secondary leaders (27%).

Some teachers have told us they'd be less likely to take trainees or ECTs due to the impact of the reforms. We'd like to know whether this is true of your school.



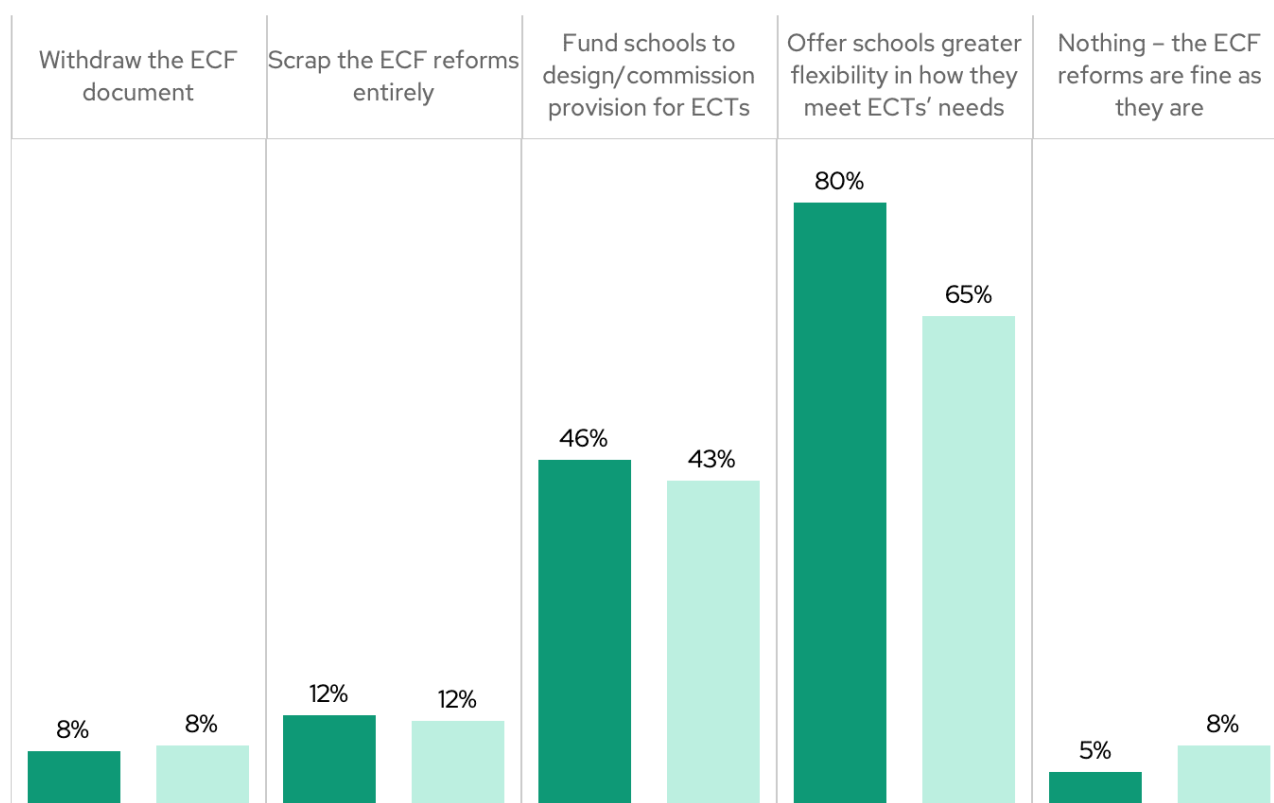
Question answered by 1,007 school leaders (members of the SLT and headteachers) on 01/03/2022



So what needs to change?

Well the good news (we knew we'd find some eventually!) is that few leaders or mentors think the ECF should be scrapped or withdrawn. However, even fewer think nothing needs to be done. Instead, the majority say that schools need greater flexibility in meeting ECTs needs.

You wake to find yourself transformed into the education minister. Which of these do you do?



Question answered by 834 teachers who are mentors to Early Career Teachers (ECTs) this year and 1,479 school leaders (members of the SLT and headteachers) on 28/02/2022 to 01/03/2022

■ School Leader
■ Mentor

What next?

Teacher Tapp will keep watching **■■**. We're only one full term in, so it is early days. If you are an ECT, or have ECTs in your school, please encourage them to get the Teacher Tapp app so they can answer our questions (and read some great CPD blogs) and their voice can be at the heart of positive change for the future.

Are you an ECT, Mentor or Leader?

Have your say and contribute to the research, download the Teacher Tapp app [here](#).

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