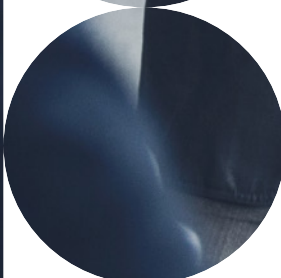
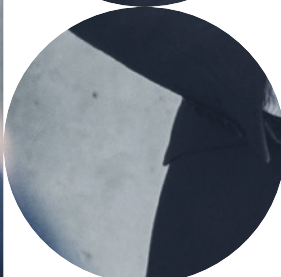
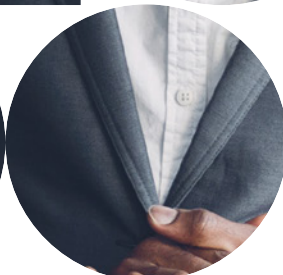
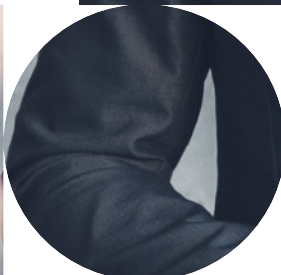
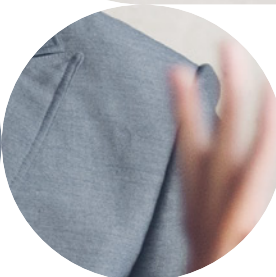


MillionPlus

The Association for
Modern Universities



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers



POLICY BRIEFING

The future of Initial Teacher
Education: Living in the age
of Covid-19 and beyond

Introduction

It is undeniable that the coronavirus pandemic has thrown education providers across the globe into crisis. In the UK, alongside the NHS, the education sector has been at the forefront of the fight against the impact of the virus over the last few months and we believe that education is also the answer to the UK's post-Covid-19 recovery and renewal.

The initial teacher education (ITE) sector has responded positively to the challenges posed by the pandemic both at its height and as the UK eases out of national lockdown. These successes have only been possible through collaboration at every level, both local and national. This spirit of co-operation can be developed as the UK moves from a state of emergency to a time of emergence while maintaining a robust, high-quality and successful ITE system. It is with this aim that we publish this joint briefing.

The impact of Covid-19 on schools has been unlike anything the UK has seen before, and it is unlikely that there will be a substantial return to 'normal', even in a purely logistical sense, in the months or even years ahead. Nobody expects the Department for Education (DfE) to have all the answers in a situation so fast moving, and we believe pooling collective expertise and experience is the best way to protect students and ensure the flow of new entrants to the profession.

As major representative organisations for ITE providers across England, MillionPlus and the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT), with the help and support of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), have all come together to propose

a cross-sector advisory group to lead on the development of a DfE National ITE Response Plan for the years ahead.

This plan will ensure that the necessary steps are taken to provide support and structure that will deliver high-quality ITE in a changed world. During the pandemic these bodies have worked closely with government, linking policy officials with expert advice and guidance, as well as offering real-time feedback. We believe this work has been of enormous benefit to schools across the country and could serve as a guide to how future work could, and should, be undertaken.

This crisis will have short, medium and long-term issues for us all to address, and getting ahead of them will be critical. For the rest of 2020 and for 2021, schools will be very different places, and the needs of these schools, and the trainee teachers placed within them, will also be different. Exceptional times call for new ways of thinking and we believe we need to think about these changes now, and work on making them an effective reality, so that together we are able to deliver an ITE system that is future-proofed and has the very best interests of trainee teachers and pupils at its heart.





A National ITE Response Plan

The recovery from the Covid-19 crisis is likely to be lengthy and will require both innovation and collaboration. Given that this crisis is likely to change the way we think and work, the final destination may look different from the picture at the outset. For those of us engaged in ITE, there is a clear and present need to think about the longer-term effects of the crisis and how the whole sector can ensure the very best support possible.

To that end, we believe that sector bodies who engage with ITE must work together with the DfE to draw up a clear strategy for the next three to five years that will ensure clear and robust plans can be formulated with engagement and support at every level.

We propose that the DfE should convene an advisory group, to include representatives from across the sector, to formulate a [National ITE Response Plan](#). Such a plan would mean that DfE alone would not be expected to have all the answers. Instead, at a

For those of us engaged in ITE, there is a clear and present need to think about the longer-term effects of the crisis and how the whole sector can ensure the very best support possible.

time of crisis, resources and skills can be pooled and the burden shared. The main objective must be to enable high-quality ITE to take place as soon as possible and we believe a joined-up plan, with the full support of the sector, can do just that.

The National ITE Response Plan would outline an overarching set of principles answering some key questions on the following core areas of ITE that have been most impacted by Covid-19:



SAFETY

How do we ensure ITE can take place across the country in a way that is safe for trainee teachers, schools and pupils?



HIGH-QUALITY PLACEMENTS

The crisis has posed, and will continue to pose, questions about how to place trainee teachers in schools at a time when schools are under incredible pressures. How can we ensure that high-quality placements are available throughout the country, and what can be done to increase the number of schools engaging in ITE in the years ahead?



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The crisis will have an immediate impact on recruitment and retention as well as a range of far-reaching and less obvious side effects. With the introduction of the DfE's Early Career Framework (ECF) and the wider Recruitment and Retention Strategy, how can we ensure these are fully compatible with a post-Covid-19 world?

Safety

The Department for Education has been right to ensure that safety remains the highest priority during the fight against this virus. All providers are working to ensure that, whatever happens, the safety of all involved is paramount and that ITE can be delivered safely across the country.

A major strand of the response plan should focus on safety and address some of the key outstanding concerns. This will ensure that: a) there is an equity of experience for trainee teachers and b) providers are aware of all the factors and can demonstrate confidence in the safety of their programmes.

The criteria concerning an applicant's '**fitness to teach**' would be one such safety concern. Tailoring provision for those who want to teach but are now vulnerable owing to this virus should be carefully considered; the profession would benefit from clear guidance and assessment of this issue by all involved. Linked to this is the issue of those who are most vulnerable. The system must make provision to ensure anyone in this category is not disadvantaged,

Tailoring provision for those who want to teach but are now vulnerable owing to this virus should be carefully considered; the profession would benefit from clear guidance and assessment of this issue by all involved

and this needs to be fully considered so that clear guidance can be accessed by potential applicants.

MillionPlus, NASBTT and UCET would be happy to work with the DfE in drafting and implementing this guidance, and in understanding how trainee teachers form an important part of this 'ecosystem'. Such an approach will also help tackle regional variations and ensure all voices are heard.



Placements

Ensuring sufficient numbers of quality placements for trainee teachers is the single biggest issue facing the 2020-21 academic year and beyond. Without these placements, all other elements of ITE will be severely impacted and it is, therefore, imperative that a plan is formed to address the immediate, and longer-term, realities of this issue. This is best achieved by the sector uniting and working together.

Sector feedback suggests that there is no lack of appetite for ITE and that, for many, recruitment is buoyant. Indeed, in times of economic uncertainty or recession, individuals often look to secure training in professions such as teaching. The particular nature of the current crisis, however, means that a 'perfect storm' of strong recruitment may be met with a significant shortage of schools willing and able to place trainees. While it is perfectly understandable at this time that placements will not be the highest priority for schools, allowing placement capacity to reduce will deepen the crisis both now and into the years ahead. Inaction now will critically undermine the supply of new entrants into the profession.

Therefore, a [response plan for placements](#), as part of a wider *National ITE Response Plan*, would be of critical importance to the sector, drawing on expertise from a range of providers and stakeholders to address this issue.

This means reviewing any barriers that schools identify that may inhibit participation with ITE in the year ahead, either for schools with a strong track record of participation or those who have not engaged thus far. To that end, there should be consultative work on some key questions around how ITE can be modified so that it continues to 'deliver' in a Covid-19, and a post-Covid-19, world. The DfE has already published some changes and additional flexibilities which are welcome. However, the sector could [develop best practice guidance](#) and a shared understanding of how quality can be maintained during the recovery from this pandemic. This will ensure all applicants and trainee teachers have confidence that their experience will be equitable with others, and that their training will be high quality and fit for purpose.

It is likely that there will be wider discussions in the education sector regarding virtual and blended learning, recognising the challenges faced and seeking to use all resources at our disposal. [The advisory group should consider the place for virtual learning within an ITE curriculum, including whether any adaptations to the Teachers' Standards are required to reflect this new reality.](#)

This in no way suggests a relaxation of standards; rather, it acknowledges that the teachers of the future will need additional skills. Having a concerted plan that tries to build a better system for the future, while also responding to the immediate crisis, could mean that some benefits emerge from an otherwise challenging and tragic period.

The advisory group could explore how to build on the immediate response and integrate it into a longer-term plan. Perhaps the most pressing question would ask how can we incentivise more schools to play an active part in ITE in the future? To secure a greater number of placements of appropriate quality, we need more schools to play an active part in training future generations of the profession. The plan should make this a key focus of its work and explore why schools do not engage and then determine how more can be encouraged to do so in the future. Is there value in considering whether mandating schools to play an active part could be effective? Should active participation in ITE be a criterion Ofsted assess when inspecting a school in the future? We believe these questions, and others like them, would be of value to the profession and could take ITE forward in a positive direction.

A response plan for placements could provide the DfE with the help and expertise it needs in order to better co-ordinate ITE in the years ahead. Of course, we must also be mindful of regional needs, but without full co-operation across the sector we could see fragmentation and division, as well as increased competition, that could be to the severe detriment of trainee teachers and their education. Now is the time to unite as a sector and have these discussions.

Recruitment and retention

Although there is some evidence that recruitment may not be problematic initially, there are key aspects that do need urgent consideration and would benefit from a sector-wide consultation, particularly if we are entering an era of economic downturn married to a wider appreciation of teachers as 'key workers'.

Discussions around realistic expectation management will be important, with applicants needing to understand the different context in which they may be operating. This is particularly true for those trainee teachers who are paying tuition fees and investing financially in their own education. There are also likely to be particular challenges associated with recruiting for primary, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as in traditionally hard-to-recruit secondary subjects such as Physics and Chemistry.

The current system may benefit from some re-evaluation in light of the seismic shifts that have occurred this year. This does not suggest that things do need to change, but it would be unwise not to consider any unintended consequences that may emerge as a result of the pandemic.

A discussion concerning the methodologies for [bursaries](#) for certain subjects would also be beneficial, as would further discussions on the use of [Subject Knowledge Enhancement \(SKE\)](#) courses as a tool for greater recruitment and retention. The uncertainties caused by the pandemic mean that changes are required, potentially at relatively short notice. Consideration must be given to how this may impact recruitment and retention on programmes. Providers will be concerned about how this impacts their marketing; a dedicated plan of action on these points could provide clarity for providers, schools and applicants.

In respect of retention, careful consideration also needs to be given to how we can create a [bespoke NQT settlement](#) for the year(s) ahead. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) will face unprecedented challenges and the current system may not be able to support them. MillionPlus, NASBTT and UCET worked with the DfE on the development of the Early Career Framework (ECF) and fully support

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the principle of an entitlement for NQTs to have access to funded and structured early professional development. However, the ECF was not designed for the exceptional circumstances faced by schools as a result of the pandemic. We feel that a discussion is urgently needed on the nature and implementation of the ECF, to recognise the singular circumstances that NQTs will be in, with some revisions made to ensure that the necessary and relevant support is available. Such a modification will by no means suggest that NQTs in 2020-2021 will lack any ability or be any less qualified; it will instead recognise that the skills required to teach will be different in the year ahead. ITT providers, if given appropriate funding and resource, would be well placed to deliver NQT support at a time where schools will have reduced capacity.

Closely connected to this, we must ensure that NQTs have access to [high-quality mentoring work](#). With the capacity of schools and potential mentors being almost certainly reduced at just the time when it is likely that we will have the greatest need for mentoring support, a collective approach is critical. We believe that there will be substantial benefits if the DfE harnesses the expertise and capacity of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers to work with schools in the development of excellent mentoring support. This can create a blueprint for future ECF work and funding should be made available to facilitate this.

Conclusion

Exceptional times call for creativity, innovation and closer collaboration. We believe that the scale of the current crisis presents enormous challenges to ITE; however, we also believe these challenges can be met and that quality provision can still be assured across the country.

The creation of a *National ITE Response Plan*, with input from ITT providers, schools, Teaching School hubs, academy trusts and other stakeholders, could create a blueprint that would inspire confidence and would deliver for the sector.

This plan would address the key questions around safety, placements and the future of recruitment and retention, and would complement the work that has already been undertaken by the Department for Education prior to the Covid-19 crisis. We wholeheartedly welcome and value the introduction of the Early Career Framework, the ITT Core Content Framework and the Recruitment and Retention Strategy, but with a changed world we see the development of a coherent long-term plan as a natural and necessary next step to help ensure the continued delivery of high-quality ITE.

This work can, and should, be established quickly to ensure we recognise all of the immediate issues for the next academic year and that we then have the scope to address the longer-term questions on the future of ITE provision.

This will be a significant piece of work and it cannot be achieved by the DfE alone. MillionPlus, NASBTT and UCET have already begun to address some of the more detailed questions and proposals included in this briefing, but we believe these should inform a wider discussion, which is why engagement from across the sector is essential.

The scale of the challenges facing ITE may be daunting, arising from a situation where uncertainty is widespread. However, with a co-ordinated response, based on a shared belief in the importance and value of high-quality ITE, it will be possible to overcome these obstacles and ensure that no trainee teacher or pupil will be disadvantaged.

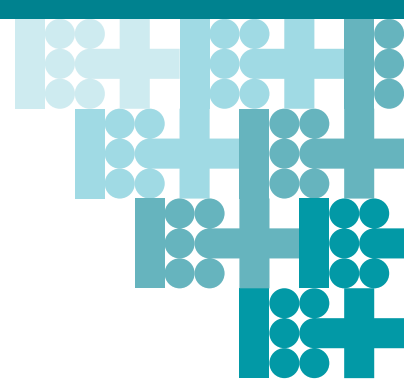
ITT providers remain committed to working with the DfE and all other ITE stakeholders in delivering provision now and in the years ahead, and we believe working together to deliver a National ITE Response Plan will enable us to face the future with confidence.

Recommendations

- Department for Education to convene a cross-sector advisory group to formulate a National ITE Response Plan, outlining an overarching set of principles focused on short-term and long-term issues on three key core areas of ITE: safety, high-quality placements and recruitment and retention.
- ITE stakeholders to work together to develop best practice guidance on maintaining a high-quality educational experience for applicants and trainee teachers during the recovery from the pandemic.
- Department for Education to work with the sector to encourage more schools to play an active part in ITE.
- Department for Education to work with the sector to ensure mechanisms are in place to support trainees and NQTs at this challenging time, with further bespoke support in place to aid the retention of teachers including the review of bursaries, subject knowledge enhancement courses and a bespoke NQT settlement.
- Department for Education to harness and resource the expertise and capacity of ITT providers to boost the availability of crucial high-quality mentoring work.







Millionplus Deans of Education Network

MillionPlus is the Association for Modern Universities in the UK, and the voice of 21st century higher education. We champion, promote and raise awareness of the essential role played by modern universities in a world-leading higher education sector. The MillionPlus Deans of Education Network has 18 members and focuses on teacher-education policy in England. It is the only MillionPlus network that includes associate members who subscribe to affiliate to this network only on an annual basis. The Deans of Education network meets with the Department for Education every three months and with other relevant sector bodies such as UCAS, Ofsted, Schools Direct and others. The network hosts regular topical workshops for its members to develop cohesive policies, positioning and agree priorities.

More information can be found here:

www.millionplus.ac.uk | [@million_plus](https://twitter.com/million_plus)

The National Association Of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT)

NASBTT is a registered charity committed to promoting high-quality schools-led programmes of training, education and professional development of teachers. NASBTT represents and draws on the collective experience of SCITT providers, School Direct Lead Schools, Teaching Schools and HEIs as well as a range of other organisations involved in the education and professional development of teachers.

More information can be found here:

www.nasbtt.org.uk | [@NASBTT](https://twitter.com/NASBTT)

This paper could not have been written without the support and input of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers.

The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)

The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers acts as a national forum for the discussion of matters relating to the education of teachers and professional educators, and to the study of education in the university sector and contributes to the formulation of policy in these fields. Its members are UK universities involved in teacher education, and a number of colleges of higher education in the university sector.

More information can be found here:

www.ucet.ac.uk | [@UCET_UK](https://twitter.com/UCET_UK)



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