

# Early Career Framework

One Year On

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## Executive Summary

The new Early Career Framework (ECF) seeks to improve early career support and development for teachers, by extending the period of support to two years and by offering a package of professional development. This includes in-school mentoring, training, and self-study materials, the latter two of which can be supplied by external providers. Based on survey responses from around 300 Early Career Teachers (ECTs) following the ECF, around 500 of their mentors and over 1000 senior leaders, this report describes whether the ECF is meeting its aims and assesses what now needs to be done to improve provision further.

Teachers who responded to the survey were generally supportive of the concept of the ECF, with just one-in-ten saying they would entirely scrap the reforms. However, there were areas they wanted to see improved, outlined in full in this report. Respondents were divided as to whether the ECF is meeting one of its aims of improving teacher retention, but they suggested it had potential to do so, given improvements.

This report makes recommendations in the following two areas:

### **On specialisation of resources:**

- Just 2% of mentors and 4% of ECTs say that the self-study material they have used has been specialised to their subject or phase. This is a key area in which both groups feel improvements need to be made, with half of ECTs saying that further specialisation of self-study material should be a priority. Further specialisation of external training was also raised by a third of mentors, who also wanted further professional development to help them deliver the ECF.
- Early Career Teachers and mentors were happy with the level of subject and phase specialisation within ECT-mentor relationships and conversations. Almost nine-in-ten secondary ECTs have a mentor who teaches the same subject (secondary) or work in the same phase (primary) as them and less than one-in-ten ECTs say these conversations need more specialisation.

### **On further improvements to resources:**

- Many Early Career Teachers and mentors see huge opportunities to improve the externally-provided resources that ECTs are using for their self-study and training. Four in five ECTs and mentors alike say that the training they have received was not well-designed and just 1-in-10 say it was a good use of time. The picture isn't any better for self-study materials, with just a third of ECTs saying they were clear and a quarter saying they give good advice.
- Two-thirds of ECTs say that their self-study leaves them clear how to apply what they have learned in the classroom about half the time or less.

## Introduction

In September 2021, the introduction of the Early Career Framework (ECF) brought about the biggest change in the way that new teachers join the profession since teaching qualifications became mandatory in the 1970s. The ECF seeks to give teachers an improved early career development experience, both in quality and length of provision. New teachers now receive a two-year package of professional development which includes in-school mentoring, training, and self-study materials, the latter two of which can be supplied by external providers.

The reforms aim to improve the rate at which new teachers improve their skills and deter newly qualified teachers from leaving the profession. This report aims to study whether the ECF is meeting its aims and assess what now needs to be done to improve provision further.

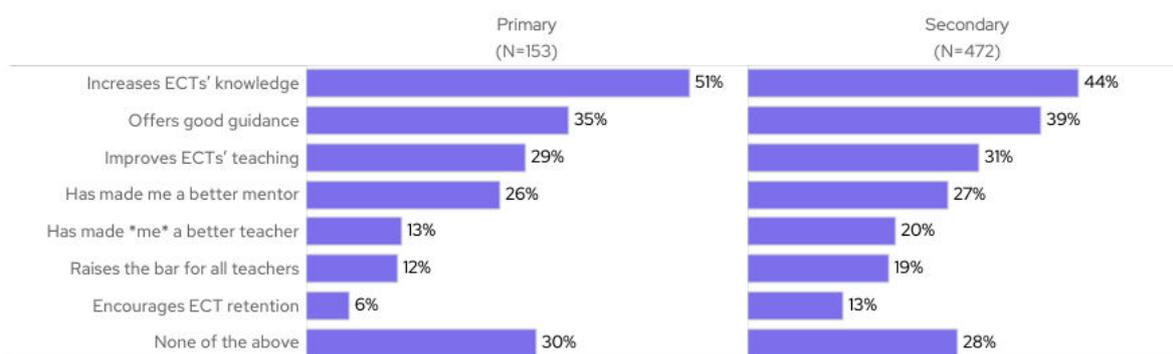
Data for this descriptive study of current practice was collected via the Teacher Tapp survey app in February and August 2022, a time when all schools were completing their first year of the ECF (and a minority were completing their second year). It includes responses from around 300 Early Career Teachers following the ECF, around 500 of their mentors and over 1000 senior leaders. Responses are reweighted to ensure they reflect those of the teaching population in terms of school type, region, job post, gender, and age.

In this report, we start by looking at overall perceptions of the Early Career Framework, before looking at desired further developments and the possible impact of the policy overall.

## Strengths and Weaknesses of the Early Career Framework

We first look at the perceived strengths of the ECF, as reported by the mentors of early career teachers at the end of the academic year. Figure 1 shows that most recognised at least one strength, but it is worth noting that just under a third of mentors felt that the framework had no strengths at all. Overall, they were most likely to praise the ECF for increasing the knowledge of Early Career Teachers, and this was particularly true of primary teachers (51%) compared to secondary teachers (44%). Just over a third felt that the framework offers good guidance.

**What are the strengths of the Early Career Framework?**



Question answered by 625 mentors to early career teachers on 04/08/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

**Figure 1: Strengths of the ECF according to mentors**

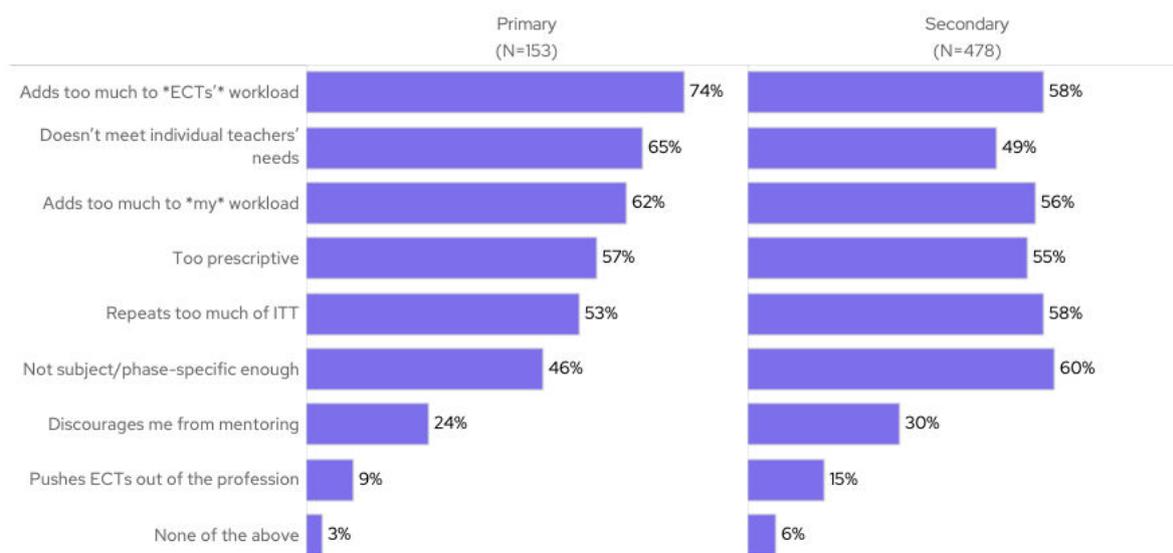
### Workload cited as one of the biggest weaknesses of the ECF

Most Early Career Teachers and mentors believe that the ECF adds a lot to their workload. Whilst most ECTs see the ECF as a burden (with 57% in February and 72% in August saying it adds a lot to their workload), arguably they do not have a good reference point since they were not in the profession prior to the reform.

However, many ECF *mentors* do have experience of the previous induction approach, so it is more noteworthy that 65% of them say that the ECF adds too much to the workload of the ECT (see Figure 2). Workload is a particular concern among primary mentors, more than three-quarters of whom think that the ECF is adding too much workload to the ECT.

Workload for ECTs isn't the only workload-related concern cited by mentors when asked about weaknesses of the ECF. Among mentors, 59% also believe that *their* workload is too high as a result as well. In February, almost half of mentors said that they had not been given additional time to undertake their mentoring role, which may be contributing to this high level of dissatisfaction.

### What are the weaknesses of the Early Career Framework?

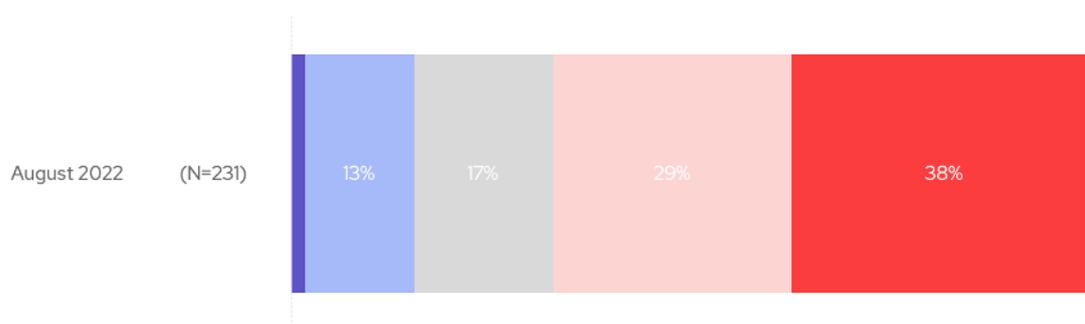


Question answered by 631 mentors to early career teachers on 04/08/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

**Figure 2: Weaknesses of the ECF according to mentors**

A slight majority of mentors are concerned about the overlap of content between the ECF and initial teacher education, with 56% of mentors saying the ECF repeats too much that is covered during initial teacher training. Early Career Teachers agree as well, with just 16% of ECTs saying they have learnt a lot that they didn't already know from either their current experience or their initial training (see Figure 3).

### "I have learned a lot from the ECF that I didn't already know (from experience or initial training)"



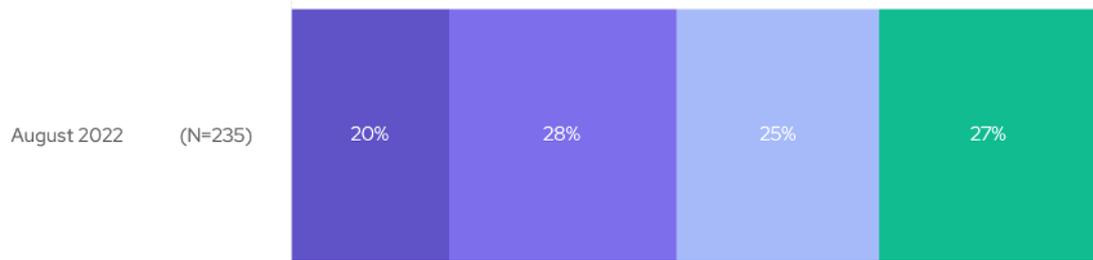
Question answered by 231 ECTs in August 2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- Strongly agree – I've learned a lot
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree – I've learned very little

**Figure 3: ECT views on what they've learnt from the ECF**

Workload and repetition of ITT material may explain why three-quarters of ECTs say they have skipped at least some of the ECF. While some 'skip rate' might be expected due to the busy nature of the profession, it is revealing that one-in-five ECTs say they have skipped a lot of the ECF programme (Figure 4).

**"I skipped some elements of the ECF programme (for example, missing training or mentor meetings)"**



Question answered by 235 ECTs in August 2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, some
- Yes, a little
- Not skipping anything

**Figure 4: Early Career Teachers who say they have skipped some parts of the ECF**

## Many want further developments of self-study and training

### Increased phase and subject specialisation

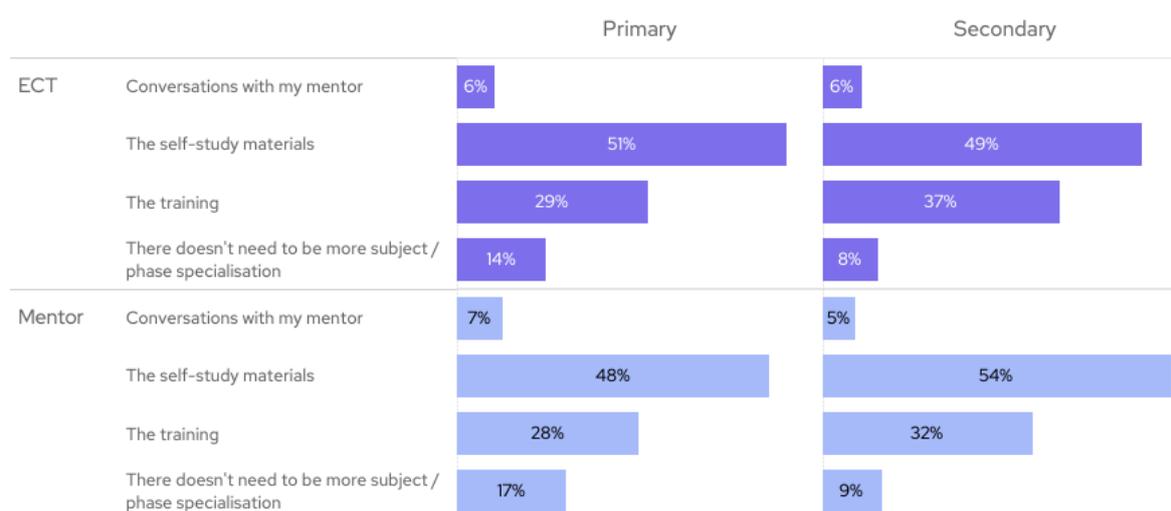
A key part of the Early Career Framework is the training and self-study. Schools have the option to provide these themselves, or to use an DfE-accredited provider. In February 2022, three quarters of senior leaders said that these materials were coming from an external provider.

Both Early Career Teachers and mentors believe that the current self-study and training material they are using is not specialised enough. When asked to describe the self-study materials, less than one-in-twenty mentors and ECTs told us they were specialised to subject or phase. Furthermore, more than half of mentors stated that a weakness of the ECF is that it is not subject/phase-specific enough. This was felt particularly strongly among secondary mentors, 60% of whom say that the ECF is not subject-specific enough.

Creating resources for an entirely new programme is very time consuming so perhaps it is no surprise that current materials are generic. However, it is clear from the responses to this survey that the vast majority of both ECTs and mentors would like to see greater subject or phase specialisation of the materials and training they are using.

The greatest target for specialisation, according to both Early Career Teachers and their mentors, is the self-study material: which more than half of respondents wanted more specialised. A third of respondents also wanted to see more specialised external training as well (see Figure 5).

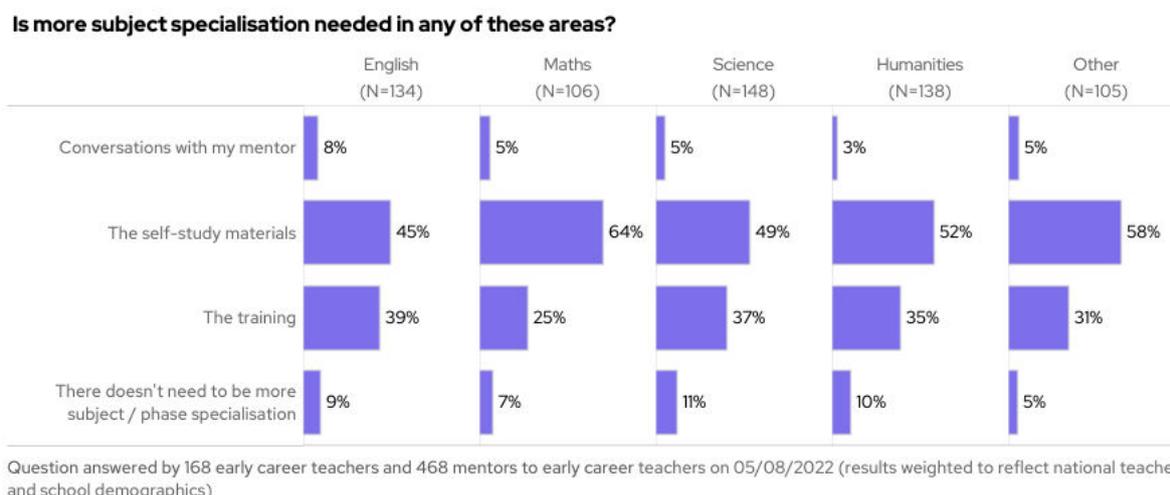
#### Is more phase (primary) or subject (secondary) specialisation needed in any of these areas?



Question answered by 51 primary and 170 secondary early career teachers and 143 primary and 471 secondary mentors to early career teachers on 04/08/2022 to 05/08/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

**Figure 5: Mentor and ECT views on which areas of the ECF require further specialisation by phase**

Across secondary ECTs and mentors, Figure 6 shows broad agreements across subjects where further development is needed. All mentors agreed that the self-study material was most in need of more subject specialisation. Maths teachers felt most strongly that self-study materials should be more specialised.



**Figure 6: Mentors and ECT views on which areas of the ECF require further specialisation by subject**

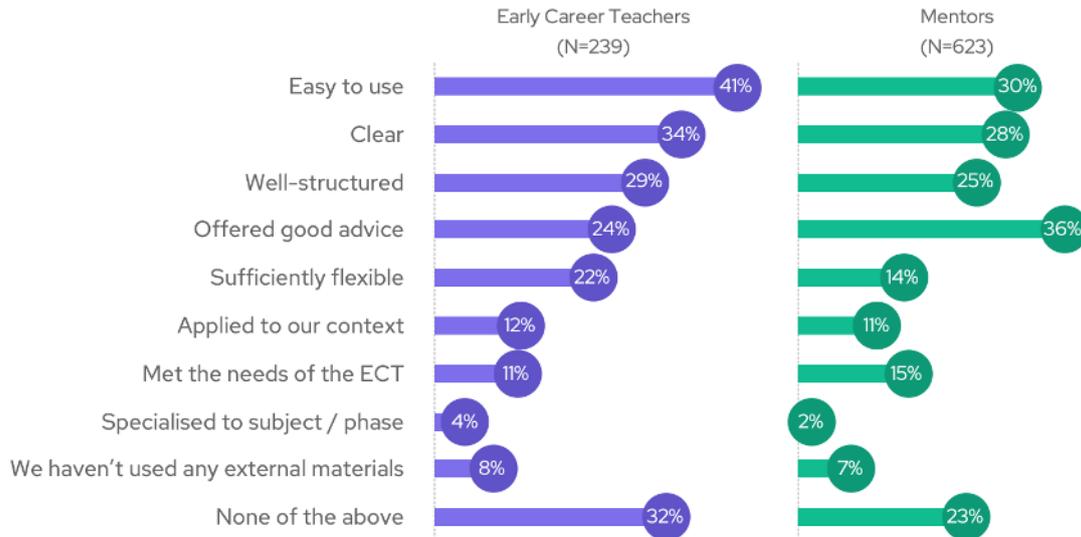
Notably, many ECTs were happy that conversations with their mentors were subject-specific. Just 6% of ECTs and mentors believe that these conversations need to change. This may come as little surprise, given that 83% of ECTs in secondary schools have a mentor who teaches the same subject as them. Further work could be undertaken here investigating whether specific departments frequently struggle to pair a mentor and a mentee – and how this influences their conversations.

### Other improvements to self-study and training

Alongside increased subject-specificity of self-study and training resources, many ECTs and mentors wanted to see other improvements to these materials. Similarly, just 12% of ECTs and 11% of mentors said the materials applied to their context. It is clearly difficult for providers to make materials precisely fit each school's context, but it is worth investigating what could be done to adapt materials better. Overall, around one-in-ten ECTs and mentors said that the materials met their needs.

As well as changes to the content within the self-study materials, ECTs and mentors also wanted more refinement of the materials. Just 34% of ECTs said the resources were clear and 41% said they were easy to use. Mentors agreed that the materials lacked clarity and were not easy to use, although more mentors (36%) believed the materials offered good advice than teachers (24%).

### Which of these describe the self-study materials ECTs have received?

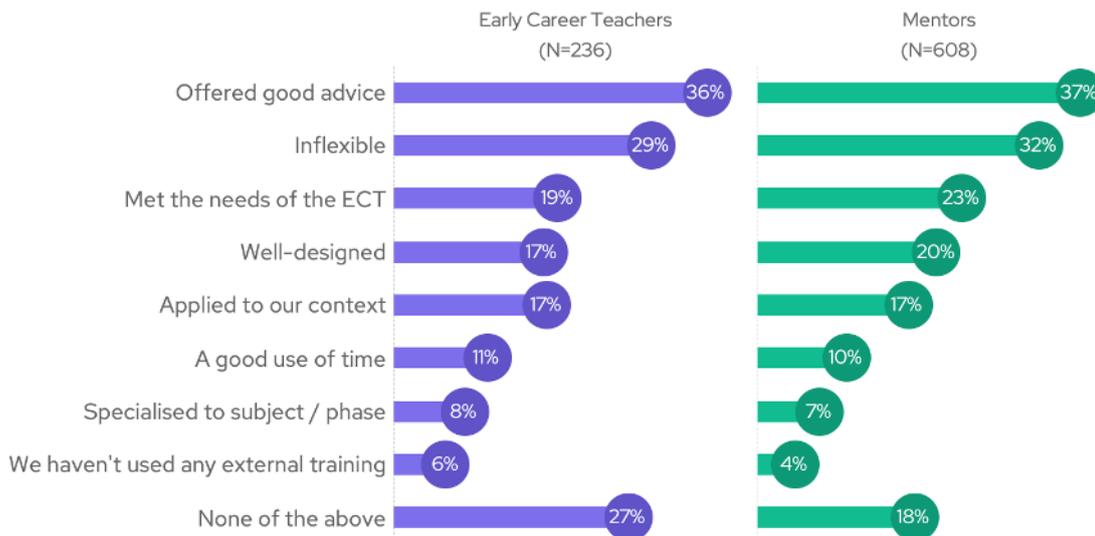


Question answered by 239 ECTs and 623 mentors in August 2022

**Figure 7: Descriptions of the self-study materials that ECTs have received**

Near-identical conclusions are true of the external training that ECTs have received. Just 8% of ECTs say that their training has been subject or phase-specific, and 17% said that it applied to their context (see Figure 8). ECTs were slightly more positive about the advice external training offered: 36% of ECTs said it gave good advice, whereas just 24% said the same of the self-study materials.

### Which of these describe the training ECTs have received?



Question answered by 236 ECTs and 608 mentors in August 2022

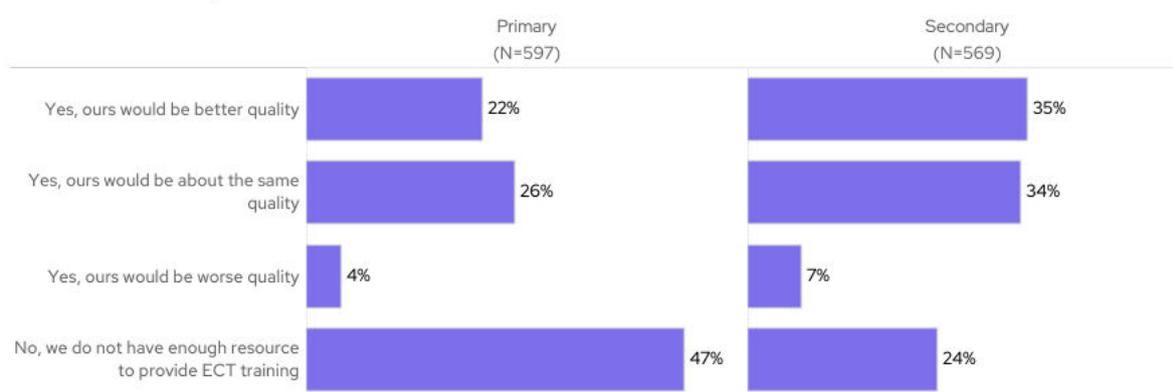
**Figure 8: Descriptions of the external training that ECTs have received**

For the training and self-study to truly fit the context of the school, schools might consider providing all the training themselves. However, senior leaders have concerns

about whether they have enough resources to do so. Primary school leaders were the least confident they would be able to support this – with just half saying they would be able to support their ECTs if they needed to. Secondary leaders were more confident: three-quarters thought they would be able to provide the training if needed.

Furthermore, many leaders felt that, if they had to supply the training themselves, it would be of better quality. Figure 9 shows that 22% of primary leaders felt this would be the case, whereas 30% said their own training would be the same or worse quality. Secondary leaders showed greater confidence: 35% said their training would be of better quality.

**Suppose the government announced that your school must supply all training necessary for the Early Career Framework. Would your school be able to do this?**



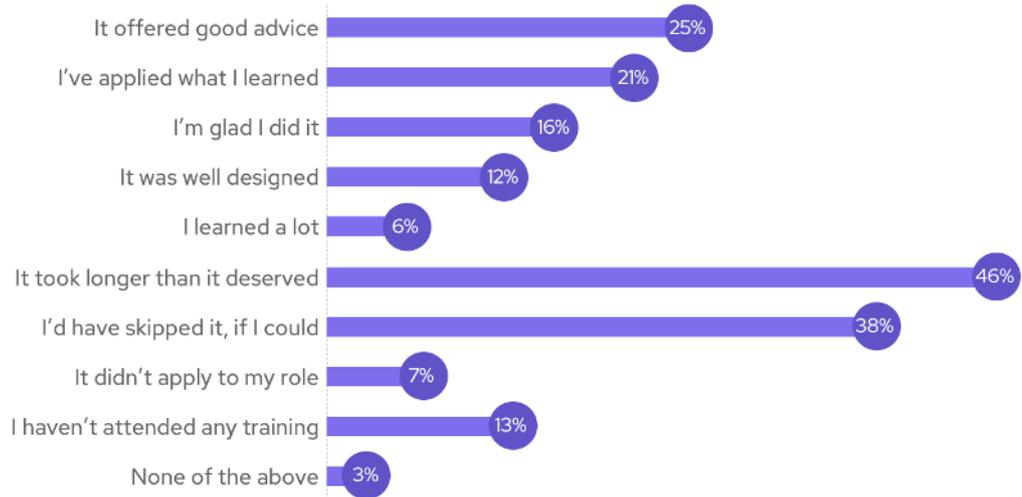
Question answered by 1,166 senior leaders on 27/09/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

**Figure 9: Whether leaders feel they would be able to supply all training for their ECTs**

### Mentors would like better training too

Mentors also wanted ECF mentor training to be improved. Figure 10 shows that just a quarter of ECF mentors said that their training offered them good advice on being a mentor and only 16% were glad that they had completed it. While from this survey it is unclear which aspects of the training mentors disliked, almost half of mentors said that it took longer than it deserved, with 38% saying they would have skipped it if they could.

**Which of these describe the \*mentor training\* you have experienced as part of the ECF?**



Question answered by 636 mentors to early career teachers in August 2022

**Figure 10: Mentors views on the mentor training they received**

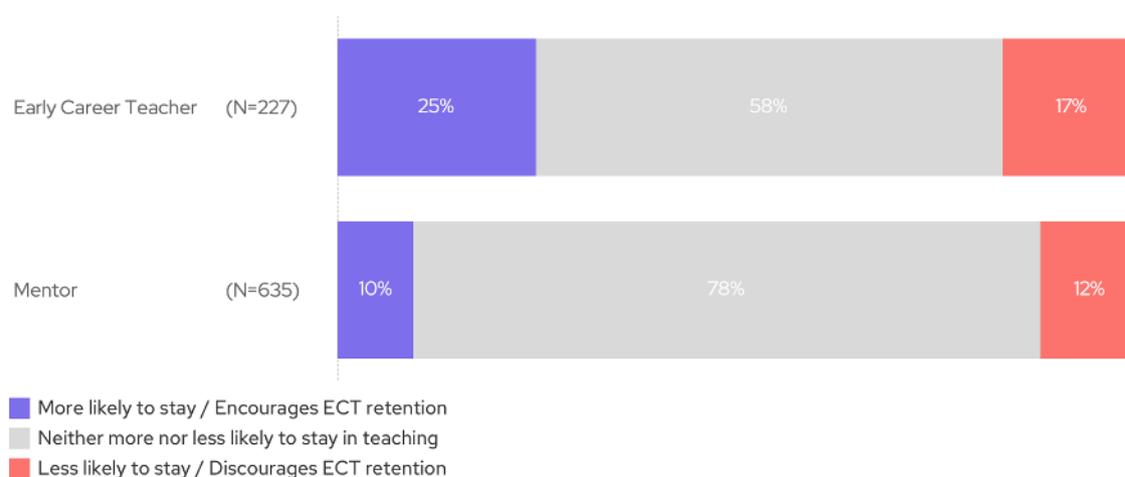
Mentors also expressed concern with their mentoring workload. In February 2022, nearly half of mentors said they had not been given additional non-contact time to work with ECTs. The demands of regular meetings and training have resulted in four-in-five mentors saying that the requirements of being an ECT mentor have added a lot to their workload.

## What is the impact of the Early Career Framework?

One of the goals of the Early Career Framework is increasing the retention of Early Career Teachers through high-quality professional development. However, early indications (Figure 11) suggest that the ECF is not having the effect on teacher retention that was intended - although few believe it is pushing teachers out of the profession either.

Almost eight in ten mentors (78%) believed Early Career Teacher support would neither increase nor decrease the retention of ECTs. Secondary mentors were more likely to think it would make a difference than primary mentors (not shown in Figure 11). Some 13% of secondary mentors believed the ECF would increase retention, a view shared by only 6% of primary mentors. However, 15% of secondary mentors thought the ECF would decrease retention, a view shared by 9% of primary mentors.

**Does the Early Career Teacher support make you more or less likely to stay in teaching? (ECTs)**  
**Does the Early Career Teacher support encourage or discourage ECT retention? (mentors)**



**Figure 11: ECT and Mentor views on the effect of the ECF on ECT retention**

Despite ECTs' and mentors' uncertainty about how the ECF will affect, it is too early to judge the ECF's effectiveness in improving the retention of newly qualified teachers, for two reasons.

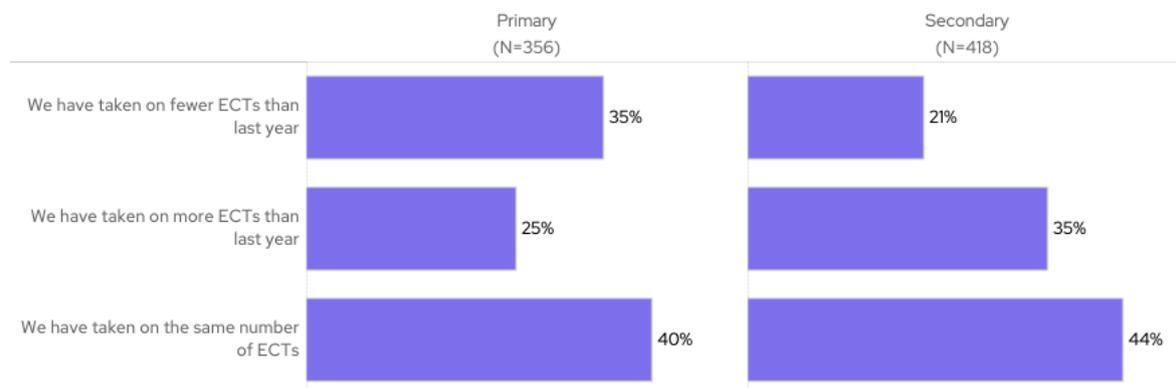
Firstly, the programme has just completed its first year. The first full cohort has still to undertake their second year before completing the ECF. There are bound to be teething issues during this initial implementation. Taking stock of the feedback from both ECTs and mentors will be important in ensuring a continued evolution of the ECF.

Secondly, this report shows that improvements could be made to address some of the concerns ECTs and mentors have articulated. In doing so, one might expect the

percentage of ECTs and mentors who say the ECF programme encourages teacher retention should increase.

However, it appears that some leaders' experiences of the ECF have caused them to rethink their approach to recruiting ECTs. Figure 12 shows that primary leaders were more likely to say they had taken on fewer ECTs than last year – although this may simply be because student rolls are currently falling in their phase.

**Did your experience of the first year of the Early Career Framework affect the number of ECTs you took on this year?**



Question answered by 774 senior leaders on 27/09/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

**Figure 12: How leaders changed their recruitment because of the ECF**

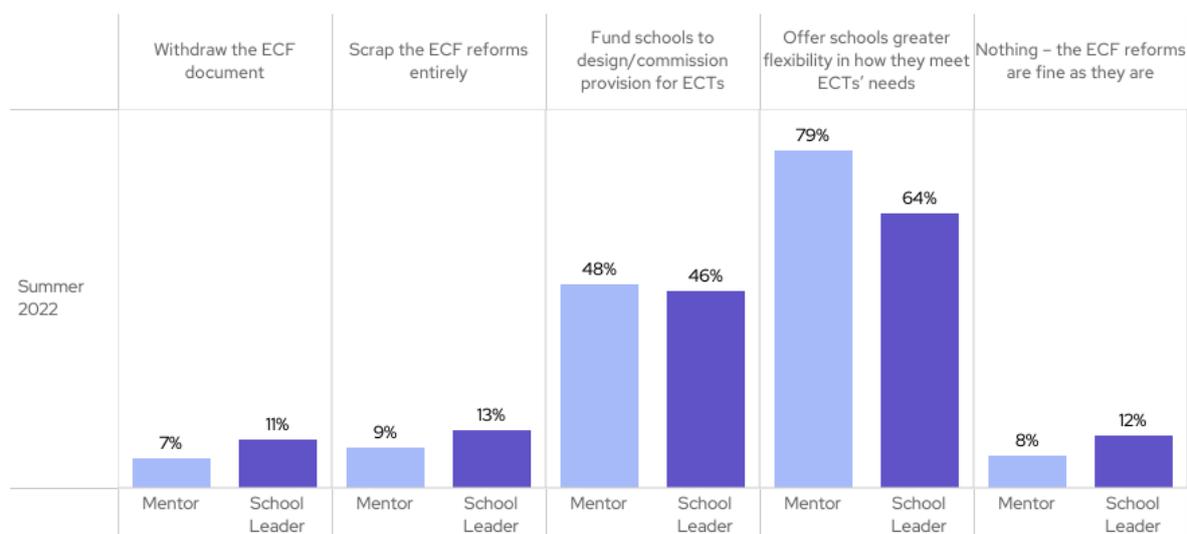
## Future of the ECF

The Early Career Framework now moves onto its second year, taking on a new cohort of trainee teachers and progressing its first England-wide cohort into their final year. It has much to focus on, including continuing to refine the self-study and training materials so that every Early Career Teacher can make the most of them.

As the year has progressed, an increasing percentage of Early Career Teachers have felt as if too much of their time has been spent on the ECF. Over half of ECTs now say they either want to opt out of some of, or spend less time on, the ECF. This represents a ten-percentage point increase compared to February 2022. Furthermore, 39% of ECTs want to opt out of the external provision, with 32% wanting to spend less time on the ECF generally.

All in all, however, very few mentors and school leaders want to do away with the ECF: they want to help refine it further and make it successful. Figure 13 shows that only around one-in-ten mentors or school leaders would entirely scrap the ECF. Most mentors and school leaders want greater flexibility in the ECF, in order to better meet the needs of the ECT.

**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 04/08/2022 to 05/08/2022

**Figure 13: How mentors and senior leaders would alter the ECF going forward**

## Survey design and sample of respondents

Teacher Tapp is a daily survey app which collects responses to around three questions from teachers in England every day at 3:30pm. Teachers are recruited to the app itself via word-of-mouth, social media, and conference events. Whilst anyone is free to download the app and use it daily, analysis is restricted to those who indicate they are indeed a teacher in England by submitting their school's name and qualifying demographic information such as job role or type of school. Teacher Tapp reweights responses to survey questions by teacher gender, age, job post and school type to ensure the panel reflects the demographics of the national population of teachers in England (using the School Workforce Census for state schools<sup>1</sup>).

The survey questions in this study were directed to three different groups of teachers:

- Teachers who said they were in their first two years of teaching
- Teachers who said they were mentors to Early Career Teachers this academic year
- Senior leaders

Table 1 shows the survey questions asked to each target group, alongside the date the survey questions were delivered, and the number of valid responses used in the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the School Workforce Census can be found here: Department for Education (2022). *Statistics on the size and characteristics of the schools' workforce in state-funded schools*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>

Target group	Question	Survey date	Responses
Early Career Teachers	I have learnt a lot from the ECF that I didn't already know (from experience or initial training)	2022/02/22	331
		2022/08/05	277
	"I skipped some elements of the ECF programme (for example, missing training or mentor meetings)"	2022/02/22	330
		2022/08/05	280
	The requirements of the ECF add a lot to my workload	2022/02/22	331
		2022/08/05	276
	Does your mentor teach the same subject as you?	2022/08/05	213
	Given the choice, I would opt out of the support I'm getting as an Early Career Teacher	2022/02/22	326
		2022/08/05	275
	How often does training/self-study leave you clear how what you've learned can be applied in your classroom?	2022/02/22	331
		2022/08/05	278
	Is more phase specialisation needed in any of these areas?	2022/08/05	69
	Is more subject specialisation needed in any of these areas?	2022/08/05	207
	Overall, the Early Career Teacher support I'm getting (in and out of school) makes me:	2022/02/22	326
		2022/08/05	276

	Which of these describe the self-study materials you have encountered as part of the ECF?	2022/02/22	336
		2022/08/05	281
	Which of these describe the training you have received as part of the ECF?	2022/02/22	332
		2022/08/05	281
	Which year of the ECF were you in last academic year (2021-22)?	2022/08/05	287
	Mentors of Early Career Teachers	The requirements of being an ECT mentor add a lot to my workload	2022/08/04
Have you been given additional non-contact time to work with ECTs?		2022/08/04	611
How many ECTs are you taking next year?		2022/08/04	694
Is more phase specialisation needed in any of these areas?		2022/08/04	171
Is more subject specialisation needed in any of these areas?		2022/08/04	524
What are the strengths of the Early Career Framework?		2022/02/28	583
		2022/08/04	700
What are the weaknesses of the Early Career Framework?		2022/02/28	581
		2022/08/04	698
Which of these describe the mentor training you have experienced as part of the ECF?		2022/02/28	601
		2022/08/04	714
Which of these describe the self-study materials ECTs have received?		2022/02/28	595
		2022/08/04	709

	Which of these describe the training your teachers have received as part of the ECF?	2022/02/28	588
		2022/08/04	703
	Will you mentor trainees/ECTs again next year?	2022/08/04	694
	You wake to find yourself transformed into the education minister. Which of these do you do?	2022/02/28	575
2022/08/04		694	
Senior Leaders	Which of these describes your ECF provision?	2022/03/01	1199
	You wake to find yourself transformed into the education minister. Which of these do you do?	2022/03/01	1161
		2022/08/05	1430
	How many ECTs are you taking next year?	2022/08/05	1436
	Did your experience of the first year of the Early Career Framework affect the number of ECTs you took on this year?	2022/09/27	1234
Suppose the government announced that your school must supply all training necessary for the Early Career Framework. Would your school be able to do this?	2022/09/27	1244	

**Table 1: Survey questions and responses from target group**