Survey findings for Teaching Commission

About NASBTT

The National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) represents the interests of schools-led teacher training provision in relation to the development and implementation of national policy developments. Our members include School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers, Teaching School Hubs, Higher Education Institutions involved in schools-led teacher training and a range of other organisations engaged in the education and professional development of teachers. We currently have more than 177 members, including 100% of the SCITT sector, representing over 10,000 individual trainees and their mentors. NASBTT is a registered charity committed to promoting high quality schools-led programmes of training, education and professional development of teachers.

Context for response

NASBTT has been invited to give evidence to the Teaching Commission, led by Baroness Professor Mary Bousted, on 9th May 2025. As always, our contribution will be shaped by views from the membership, and the Teaching Commission has asked us specifically to consult NASBTT members on four key themes based on evidence they have heard so far. We issued a survey to our members in April/May 2025, and 37 responses were received by 6th May 2025 (although the survey remains open for completion until 12th May 2025). The following sections present our summary findings at the time of writing:

Key findings/ideas

Q1: For your SCITT, what are your perspectives on the current ITT/teacher recruitment market – in comparison with recent years – and are there any areas (geographic/sector/ subject) where it is particularly difficult to get teachers?

Recruitment Trends
- Secondary recruitment is relatively stable, especially in subjects with bursaries (e.g. Maths, Biology, English), but quality concerns persist.
- Primary recruitment is declining in both quantity and quality, worsened by the lack of financial support.
- Recruitment levels are broadly similar to last year but significantly down compared to five years ago.

Subject-Specific Challenges
- Persistent shortages in:
  - Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science
  - RE, DT, Geography, MFL (Languages)
  - Social Sciences, Business Studies
- Maths and Sciences attract applicants due to bursaries, but subject knowledge is often weak.
- Music, English, Art have seen some improvement in applications, but Music is impacted by funding and closures of relevant PGCE courses.

Candidate Quality and Background
- Increase in applicants with overseas qualifications or non-subject-specific degrees, making subject knowledge assessment more time-consuming.
- Decline in career changers and teaching assistants applying, largely due to financial barriers.
- Some providers note fewer male applicants, especially in Primary.

- Concerns about lack of real classroom experience and poor subject knowledge in many applicants.

Geographic Variations
- Rural and coastal areas (e.g. Cornwall, Hastings, Shropshire, Northamptonshire) struggle most due to limited HEI presence and transport challenges.
- Urban areas are often saturated with providers, making competition stiff.
- North vs South divide observed in provision and demand.

Systemic and Structural Issues
- Lack of funding and bursaries is the most frequently cited barrier, particularly for non-STEM and primary subjects.
- School budget constraints prevent schools from offering salaried roles.
- Competition from national providers (e.g. Ambition, Teach First) affects local recruitment.
- Negative media perception and cost-of-living pressures deter potential applicants.

Q2. On the ECF, generally, is this good foundation for moving on in the profession? What has been the experiences of trainees/ECTs and mentors? How could it be improved? What else do teachers/mentors need to know or experience?

Overall Sentiment
- Generally Positive Foundation: Most agree the ECF provides a solid foundation for new teachers and offers important continuity from ITT.
- Valuable for Trainees: ECTs appreciate the structured support, protected time, and mentoring.
- Mentor Challenges: Mentors frequently report workload concerns, lack of time, and insufficient recognition or CPD for their role.

Key Strengths
- Structured & Parity: The framework ensures consistency and equity in training across providers.
- Improved Over Time: Repetition from earlier years has been reduced and the integration between ITT and ECF is improving.
- Support for New Teachers: Reduced teaching load and access to expert mentoring are valued.
- Embedding Practice: Better shared language and clearer progression in teaching practice.

Common Criticisms
- Repetition: Content often overlaps heavily with ITT, particularly for those from high-quality SCITT programmes.
- Generic Content: Materials are too broad and not always relevant for specific phases (e.g., EYFS, special schools).
- Lack of Progression: ITTECF lacks clarity on how learning should deepen across the ECT years.
- Mentor Time and Capacity: Schools struggle to release mentors; mentor selection is sometimes based on availability, not expertise.
- Workload & Delivery: Training often takes place after hours, increasing pressure on both mentors and ECTs.
- Implementation Variability: Experience depends heavily on provider quality and local delivery.

Suggestions for Improvement

- More Tailored Content: Allow flexibility for individual ECT needs and subject/phase specialisms.
- Recognition for Mentors: Better integrate mentoring into school CPD models and reward it appropriately.
- Support Diversity & Inclusion: Recognise how ECTs contribute to school capacity and diversity.
- Fast-Track Options: Consider accelerated routes for high-performing trainees.
- Better Integration: Align more closely with Teacher Standards and ensure a smooth scaffolded progression from ITT to ECT.
- Enhance Mentoring: Prioritise authentic mentoring/coaching over instructional models.

Q3. In your experience, how are SCITT leaders supported to develop a learning culture that is engaging and supportive for teachers and trainees? How do SCITTs support other leaders? In what ways is this making a difference to culture?

Collaboration and Culture
- Collegiality between SCITTs has increased post-market review.
- A strong culture of postgraduate learning exists for most trainees.
- Some variability remains in schools' commitment to professional standards and ITT.
- Collaboration is often driven locally but can be hampered by competition and time constraints.
- A "them and us" divide still exists in some areas between SCITTs and schools.

Support and Networks
- NASBTT is the primary and most valued support body, offering:
  - Training
  - Best practice guidance
  - Leadership development
  - A collaborative community
- Local networks and Teaching School Hubs are useful but inconsistently attended.
- Some SCITT leaders feel isolated without NASBTT membership or strong local partnerships.

Sector Challenges
- New DfE requirements for 2024-25 have:
  - Reduced autonomy in curriculum delivery.
  - Added pressure to meet compliance over culture-building.
- Increased costs and expectations strain resources.
- The rise of larger SCITTs has negatively impacted smaller providers' recruitment.
- Limited school capacity and engagement in ITT due to workload and competing priorities.
- Ongoing funding shortfalls are a major barrier.

Leadership and Professional Development
- SCITTs promote mentoring as a leadership pathway.
- Mentors are upskilled through in-house and NASBTT training.
- Trusts support leadership development through NPQs and bespoke programmes.
- SCITTs influence school and MAT culture by embedding teacher development into leadership planning.
- Efforts to develop teacher educator career paths are emerging but not widespread.

5. Impact and Contribution
- SCITTs have positively impacted school CPD and teaching quality.
- Alumni networks, mentor development, and CPD dissemination help elevate partner schools.

- Initiatives such as Voice 21 training, Instructional Coaching, and MHFA enhance CPD at a broader level.
- Commitment to long-term teacher quality and retention is a core shared value.

Recommendations and Opportunities
- Strengthen SCITT collaboration through structured forums (e.g. QA panels).
- Increase opportunities for peer support and shared resource development.
- Improve alignment between schools and ITT providers to break down competitive barriers.
- Advocate for clearer DfE guidance and increased funding to enable sustainable delivery and innovation.

Q4. How do you support recruitment of teachers from Global Majority Heritage backgrounds? How are trainees/ECTs from these backgrounds supported in placement schools? How can we best retain teachers from these backgrounds?

Visa Issues
- SCITTs struggle with visa issues, as they cannot support visas, which affects recruitment, especially for international candidates. The cost of visa sponsorship is also a challenge for retention.

Personalised Support
- Trainee support is tailored to individual needs, with efforts to include more input from senior staff and trainers. Programs emphasise inclusivity and aims to ensure that all trainees, regardless of background, have a positive experience.

Inclusive Practices
- SCITTs focus on inclusivity within its curriculum, recruitment, and mentoring. They offer training for mentors and leaders on creating inclusive environments and have introduced policies to break down barriers, such as providing prayer rooms and additional support for students with specific needs.

Diversity in Recruitment
- While they have a diverse trainee cohort, SCITTs acknowledge challenges in recruiting more teachers from GMH backgrounds. They strive to ensure that recruitment materials and processes reflect this diversity.

Placement Challenges
- SCITTs work hard to place trainees in schools with diverse staff, though some schools in less diverse areas pose challenges. Feedback from trainees has highlighted the importance of seeing themselves represented in both staff and student bodies.

Retention and Support
- To retain trainees, SCITTs emphasise the creation of a sense of belonging, both within the SCITT community and in placement schools. They are improving mentor training and actively working to address any issues that trainees face in their placements.

Future Plans
- SCITTs plan to work with organizations like Mission 44 to improve inclusivity, particularly for non-white trainees. They also plan to gather more data on the experiences of their trainees from diverse backgrounds to further refine their existing support strategies.