National College for
Teaching & Leadership

The customer journey to initial teacher training

Research brief

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J Williams, E Pollard
Institute for Employment Studies

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Research aims

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), an Executive Agency of the Department for Education (DfE), is responsible for ensuring that enough high quality trainees enter teacher training and early years teacher training to secure a sufficient supply of new teachers. NCTL routinely reviews processes and procedures to ensure they are able to meet the targets set by DfE as well as the needs of trainees. As part of this endeavour, NCTL in 2015 commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to further enhance their understanding of the 'customer journey' – the experience of those who register an interest in, and progress towards, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) – in order to identify where changes can best be made to maximise efficient and cost-effective recruitment to ITT.

More specifically this research sought to build on earlier research[1] to understand: why potential teacher trainees make the choices they do, choosing specific routes and phases including School Direct and early years; and what happens as individuals move along the customer journey towards ITT and why some become lost and withdraw from the process. The research aimed to address 9 key questions:

1a: What factors influence individuals' choice of phase and subject?

1b: What factors influence choice of early years ITT (which provides Early Years Teacher Status) over other teaching options?

2a: What factors influence individuals' choice of a particular ITT route and type of provider?

2b: What perceptions do individuals have of School Direct and what factors influence these perceptions?

2c: Does quality factor in decisions about training provider and type of programme?

2d: Does the application process factor in decisions about training provider and type of programme?

3: Why are some potential teacher trainees lost to the customer journey?

4a: What are individuals' views of the support mechanisms provided by NCTL?

4b: What delivery decisions may influence customer choices regarding recruitment to ITT and early years ITT?

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[1] In particular Matthias C (2014) Qualitative Research with Shortage Subject Teaching Candidates: The Journey to Teacher Training, National College of Teaching and Leadership

Research approach

The research comprised two main strands; a quantitative phase gathering data via an online survey and a core qualitative phase gathering in-depth information about the experiences of individuals through telephone interviews and focus groups.

The research was designed to gather a sample that was broad and wide reaching, and draw in individuals from all backgrounds, considering all routes to ITT, and at different stages in the customer journey. The sample was therefore drawn in early 2015 from three main populations: i) those registering with the Get Into Teaching website from 2011/12 to date, ii) those who applied to ITT programmes via University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) for places in the 2014/15 academic year (included placed and not yet placed applicants), and iii) those who contacted providers of early years ITT. These were three random samples of unknown total populations.

The online survey took place between 9th and 30th March 2015, and gained responses from 1,378 individuals who were either registered with the Get Into Teaching Website, had applied for ITT through UCAS or had applied for early years ITT through a registered provider. The majority of respondents were female (79%) and from white backgrounds (78%) which reflects the general teaching population; and 55% had a first class or upper second honours degree. At the time of the survey: 56% lived with a partner; 45% had caring responsibilities; and 45% were either still studying or had recently finished their studies, 14% were already working in the education sector, and 38% were working elsewhere and looking to move into teaching (plus 3% where circumstances were not reported). The main purpose of the survey was to recruit individuals for the qualitative phase of the research and 628 respondents agreed to further participation. NCTL were particularly interested to hear views from: those lost to the customer journey (who hadn't or didn't plan to make an application, termed 'Lost applicants'); those who considered School Direction options; those who had considered the early years age group; and those generally under-represented in ITT (males and those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds). Although the survey achieved a response rate of five per cent, it did provide indicative findings and early evidence on decisions and experiences for the NCTL.

Overall 89 individuals took part in interviews either individually by phone (77) or face to face in a focus group (12). These interviews took place between May and July 2015, and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each. Individuals were selected from the survey respondents willing to take part in the qualitative research. Interviewees were from a mix of backgrounds and prior experiences including family commitments, age, gender, ethnicity, degree result, and home region. Approximately half of the interviewees (46) were Lost applicants, 35 had made an application for ITT and 8 were still considering applying; 32 had considered a School Direct route; and 34 had considered applying for an early years ITT; thus reflecting the groups of key interest for this research.

The evidence presented in this research brief draws on these survey responses and interview feedback.

In addition, secondary data on initial teacher trainees was analysed to provide further context. This included analysis of a large survey of postgraduates studying in England in 2013/14 (commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills[2]) as this provides additional insight into the profile and also the decisions and experiences of *some* initial teacher trainees – those who had undertaken a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). It also allows for comparisons between PGCE students and those studying for other professional postgraduate qualifications such as nursing, social work or law.

ITT Findings

The section numbers in the following relate to the relevant sections of the main research report.

Motivations and triggers to ITT and teaching careers

- Many individuals had always wanted to be a teacher, and often felt strongly that they would make a good teacher. For others the interest in teaching develops over time; and the interest is often sparked by formal or informal work experience in schools, nurseries or with youth groups (Section 2.2)

- Some develop an interest in teaching whilst further into their careers and life journey, intending to use teaching as a way back to the labour market or as a way to regain control of their careers and do a rewarding/more satisfying job (Section 2.2).

- Individuals tended to have multiple motivations but the strongest motivating factors to teaching careers and ITT were the opportunity to inspire children, and to have a positive impact on people's lives and their local community (altruistic motivations). In general teaching was regarded as a positive, meaningful and recognised profession; with education critical in enabling children to gain the skills and confidence needed for their lives (Section 2.3).

- Other key motivators were: passion for a specific subject and desire to pass on this interest to others plus the potential to use skills and knowledge gained (fit with interests and beliefs). The longer holidays and job stability offered by teaching was also a motivator, although not generally the primary motivator. Teaching was also

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[2] Pollard E et al (forthcoming), Understanding mature entrants' transitions to postgraduate taught study, BIS

believed to be a career that could facilitate greater geographic mobility within the UK and abroad (Section 2.3).

Figure 1: Importance of potential motivators to considering a career in teaching (%)
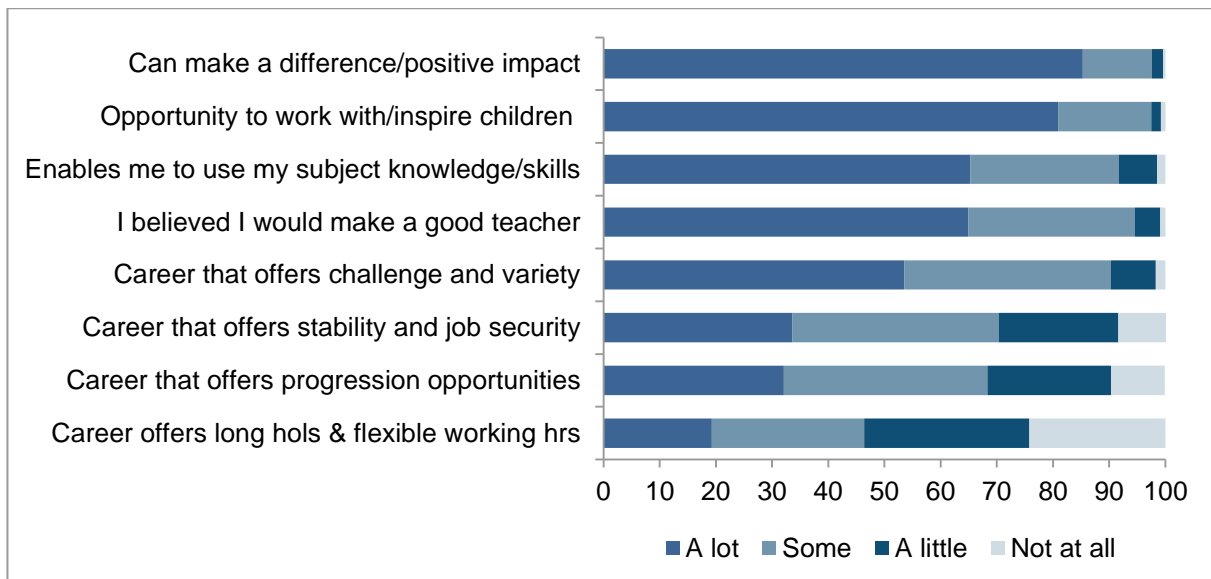
- In general individuals had strong preferences for undertaking training with specific age groups (or phase) and thus not easily deterred from their choices. This was indicated by the options considered and the spread of applications made, and relatively few applied for ITT in all potential age ranges (Section 3.2). Phase preference was one of the first decisions made before deciding on a programme or provider. This preference tended to be influenced by: a) potential for greatest impact; b) current and previous experiences with children; c) perceptions about behaviour (who would be the easiest to interact with and manage); and d) preference for learning style, focus and structure (Section 2.4).

  - Working with early years was viewed to offer highly flexible, individualised and tailored learning.

  - Working in the primary sector was viewed to provide opportunities to work intensively with one year group and teach a range of subjects, to use more challenging materials and have some structure to lessons than when working with younger children.

  - Working in the secondary sector was felt to enable teachers to focus on a single subject, to teach at an advanced/deeper level, introduce more complex concepts and to work with pupils interested in the subject.

- Individuals often needed a trigger (push or pull) to consider teaching as a career or to actually make an application for ITT. Push factors most commonly related to dissatisfaction with current job, career or situation or a change in circumstances such as redundancy or ill-health. Pull factors included positive recent experience

working with young people; encouragement or inspiration of others; more (visible and local) options/ways in to teaching; and availability of funding. Push factors are clearly aspects beyond the influence of NCTL but pull factors are potentially areas where NCTL can have an influence (Section 2.5).

- For individuals to look seriously into making an application for ITT they needed a sufficient push or for the pull to overcome the perceived benefits of their current situation (such as a comfortable job); they needed to see teaching as a positive move that they could achieve and that would bring greater rewards than they were currently receiving (Section 2.5).

Preferences for ITT and application behaviours

- Some individuals were only vaguely aware that training can take place in schools or in university. Lack of awareness appeared to be driven by: the evolving nature of routes; availability and visibility of local options; and difficulties accessing appropriately tailored and impartial information (see Section 3.5.1).

- Potential teacher trainees tend to consider a wide range of options and then narrow these down somewhat when making actual applications (Section 3.1).

- Location (which was often about accessibility and affordability) was often the primary motivator and shaping factor when it came to choosing ITT options, and local options are important in seeing ITT as accessible. Applicants frequently chose positions and higher education institutes (HEIs) that were close to home (Section 3.5.5). Other factors influencing preferences for route included: preferences for learning style; potential flexibilities of the programme; extent of work experience and thus confidence in the workplace; perceived employment advantages; views of others; and availability of funding (Section 3.6).

- In addition, preference for either HEI-led or school-led provision was based on: a) experience of prior learning, and preferred learning style, b) extent of work experience either within or outside of the education sector, c) having caring or other responsibilities, d) perceived employability advantages, e) the perceptions/views of family and friends, and f) availability of funding. Indeed, cross-cutting both choice of ITT route and subject, finance plays an important role in what makes an ITT 'package' suitable (Section 5.3).

- HEI-led provision was the most commonly considered and applied for route to ITT but this was often considered alongside school-based provision (Section 3.4). HEI-led programmes were regarded as the traditional choice and perceived to offer greater theoretical underpinning, international recognition and progression to other higher level qualifications (Section 3.5.1).

Figure 2: Types of training programmes considered and applied for (%)
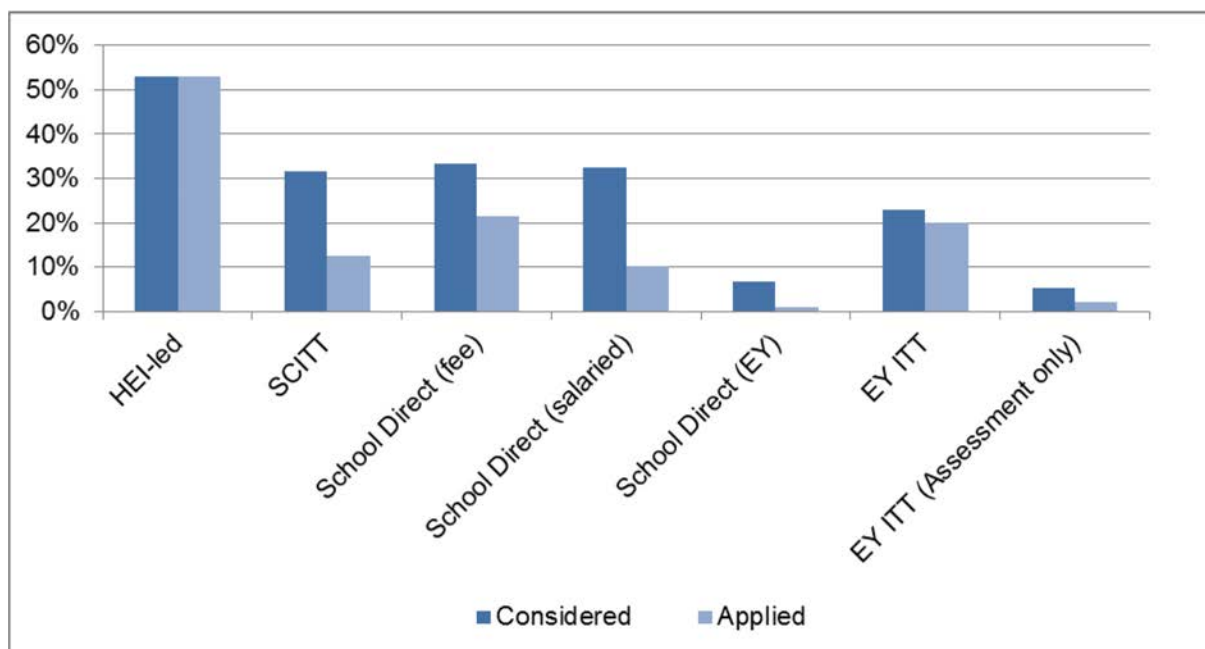
- School-led provision (school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) and School Direct) was perceived to be more 'hands on' and more appropriate for career changers whether within or outside of the education sector. It was seen to offer a practical approach to learning, allow individuals to steep themselves in the realities of teaching, embed trainees within a school and increase likelihood of employment post-training, and make training more accessible by widening the pool of local training opportunities, allowing some individuals to stay near families or support networks (Section 3.5.3).

- However there was a considerable drop off between consideration and actual application for School Direct salaried and SCITT courses. Indeed only one in five of those considering a School Direct salaried ITT programme actually go on to apply for one, and two in five don't apply for ITT at all (Section 3.4.1). This indicates that for many if a salaried place is not available they don't have or want an alternative as they need the continued income that this option offers (it is in effect 'a deal breaker'). School Direct salaried places were particularly sought after, yet were hard to come-by given their limited availability and the strong competition for places (Section 3.5.3).

- A number of points during the application process were found to be especially tricky: fitting application requirements around existing work or study commitments, the difficulties in identifying or communicating with School Direct-offering schools, gaining school-based experience, evidencing eligibility, obtaining referees and writing a personal statement. Some of these difficulties could perhaps be eased through support from NCTL (Section 3.7).

- Some individuals received several offers and decisions about which training place to accept were heavily influenced by instinct, and those chosen were valued for their pleasant environment, friendly and professional attitudes, and helpful and nurturing ethos (Section 3.8).

Information, advice and support about ITT

- The vast majority of individuals reported receiving support or advice during their decision making about ITT. However experiences of accessing information and support varied greatly according to gender, ethnicity, age, career circumstances, caring responsibilities, and eligibility for scholarships. Those lost to the customer journey were less likely to have received any support during their decision making (See section 4.1.1).

- A range of support is provided by NCTL to potential teacher trainees to help them progress along the customer journey – this includes information, personal support, and financial support. Information is primarily provided through the Get Into Teaching website, and this offers a live chat facility for additional information and advice and access to the specialist phone support service, the Teaching Line. Personal support for some is provided through the Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) programme, access to classroom experience through the School Experience Programme, and tailored support through the application process with Premier Plus.

- Internet searches were a common way to start research into ITT but the large volume and spread of information could be confusing. Interviewees therefore wanted a central source for information about teacher training where they could compare different options and understand the differences between the routes. Some individuals preferred face to face or telephone based resources where their individual questions could be answered and they could receive personalised advice and guidance as to which options would suit them (Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3.1).

- Across all respondents, two in five remembered registering with the Get Into Teaching website but a large proportion had either not used it or were unsure if they had registered at some point in the past. The main reason for registering with the website was to access further information and it was felt to offer a range of information, that was unbiased and impartial, and provide access to further positive services such as advisers, roadshows and help with gaining school experience. In general Get Into Teaching was regarded as a good starting point for research but some found it complex and jargon heavy (Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).

- Premier Plus was felt to be a very valuable resource helping individuals with choosing options, making applications, encouragement through to interviews and rejections phases, and getting experience in schools. School based experience was felt to be extremely valuable: to gain a first-hand understanding of the sector and how schools worked; and in helping decide upon or confirm preferred phase

and (if relevant) specialism. Interviewees recommended getting as much experience as possible (Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3).

- Many interviewees had talked to friends, family, acquaintances or colleagues who were teachers, and these individuals could help with writing personal statements and wider advice and encouragement (although given the evolution of ITT, their knowledge may not cover all the potential training options available). Another key source of information and support were training providers, who were particularly valued for providing information about courses and funding (Section 4.1).

- Interviewees provided feedback on their unmet support needs, and key topics that individuals felt they would have liked more information about included: training options and suitability, course content and structure (including time commitments required, and opportunities to study part-time), funding and eligibility, practical insights into teaching, and a better understanding of the application process. These do not necessarily indicate gaps in provision but, at least, gaps in awareness; and suggest areas for increased marketing and reach of support arrangements. (Section 4.3).

- Those who had previous qualifications from outside of the UK felt it was difficult to find information on whether their qualification was eligible or how to convert a teaching qualification (Section 4.3).

- Several interviewees felt that there were limited resources available to prepare and inform oneself about the skills test, reporting that there were few examples on websites (4.3).

Challenges and barriers to ITT

- Individuals can and do drop out all along the journey to ITT and there are a number of pressure points: initial fact finding and decision-making (research); gathering experience and evidence (getting prepared); the application process; and securing a place. Individuals need support at each of these pressure points (See Section 5.1).

- Drop-out from the customer journey is neither necessarily negative nor final. It can result from individuals making an informed decision before committing time and resources that teaching is not right for them at that stage in their life/career. Also many of those dropping out (as many as three in five) might consider ITT again in the future, perhaps if their circumstances change or perceived barriers are removed or reduced (Section 5.1).

- Some of those who drop-out may not have had the motivation and resources to finish the customer journey into a teaching role or perhaps the conviction and qualities looked for by the department. The danger is that some of those Lost could make effective teachers. Exploring the barriers and challenges encountered during

the customer journey can help to identify areas where stakeholders, including the NCTL could tackle to enable more individuals to take up ITT (Section 5.1).

- It was rare for individuals to face no issues, challenges or barriers on their customer journey to ITT, and the majority of individuals faced a number of difficulties (especially as they moved further along the pathway to ITT). However it may only need one significant barrier to stop an individual from progressing (Section 5.2 and 5.3).

- Survey responses of those further along the customer journey (either having made an application and/or secured a place, or very close to making an application) indicated that they felt they faced a different set of key challenges to those that were Lost from the journey. This suggests that as individuals progress towards ITT, different aspects about the process come into view and different worries emerge (Section 5.3).

Figure 3: Barriers experienced by Lost applicants (%)
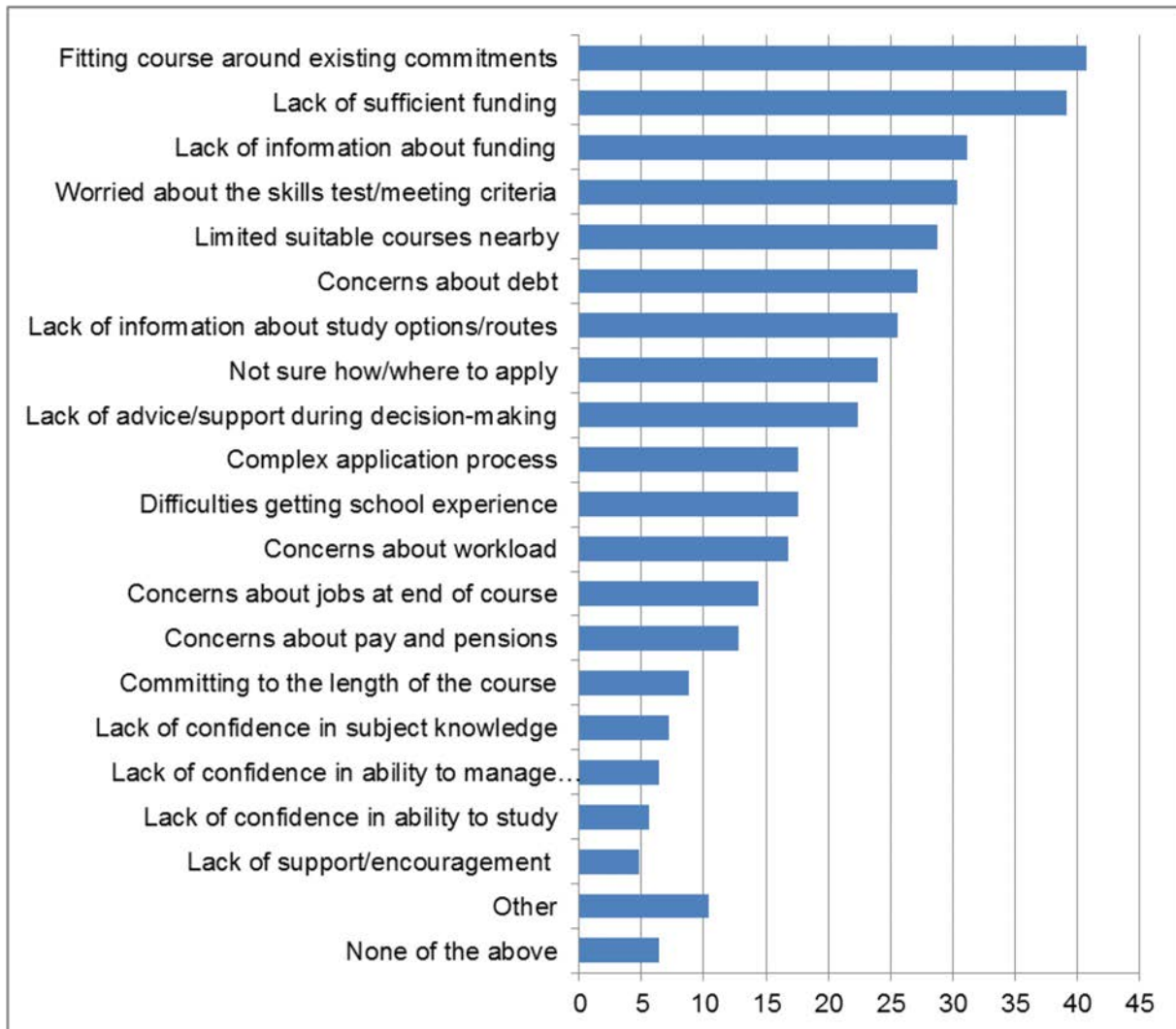
Source: IES survey, 2015. All those who did not make an application

- The first barrier faced by potential ITT candidates is fitting the course around their existing work, family and financial commitments, and this first hurdle is where many Lost applicants fall. Individuals really need to understand the realities of training so they can decide if they can make sufficient 'space' to study (Sections 5.2 and 5.4.1).

- The second and arguably the most critical barrier faced is funding. Individuals worry about meeting the costs of studying (fees and living costs) and the opportunity costs of lost earnings whilst studying, and lack information about costs and sources of funding. Also the levels of funding available can feel disappointing when compared to previous salaries earned; the eligibility criteria too stringent; and the prospects of adding to already substantial debt too troubling. Taken together financial barriers are the most common form of barriers faced by those who eventually drop-out of the customer journey (5.4.2).

- Individuals also need to confirm that they can meet the criteria set for the ITT programme. Concerns around the criteria relate to: a) organising, taking and passing the skills tests; b) having and proving they have the required entry qualifications; and c) having the required work experience. The criteria can appear inflexible, difficult to understand or justify, and can take considerable time to gather the required evidence. Meeting the criteria can also seem like an overly complex process which can deter applicants; or individuals can fail, and despite wanting to, cannot progress (Section 5.4.3). Another challenge faced is to find a suitable programme. For many individuals location is particularly critical (especially for those considering only one type of ITT option, less flexible in their outlook) and they ideally want an ITT programme that is within an easily commutable distance that will allow them to balance their other commitments and reduce the costs (of travel, and childcare, and possibly allowing for some part-time work). Location is also a concern after training, as individuals want to find work locally. A perceived a lack of suitable local options, which may reflect the reality of opportunities but could reflect a limited awareness and understanding of options, can deter individuals from applying (Section 5.4.4).

- Having the information and support individuals need to make decisions about which programme and provider is right for them is also a challenge. Individuals can feel overwhelmed with the information available, and can find it contradictory or not appropriate to their needs and circumstances. If individuals are unable to find the information they need, or are too confused and do not feel able to make decisions which will have a financial and lasting career implication (and affect their families), they may put their plans for initial teaching training on hold (Section 5.4.5).

- The application process itself can act as a barrier particularly for those further from the education system and not used to UCAS. Individuals can find the application process, including attending interviews, time consuming, complex and difficult, and they can be frustrated with a perceived lack of communication and feedback throughout the application process, and feel rushed leaving them with little time to properly research their options. This can leave individuals feeling they are not valued which could prevent them from continuing with an application (Section 5.4.6).

- A lack of confidence can also act as a barrier, particularly when added to other more structural barriers such as concerns about finances and difficulties fitting in study with other commitments. Here individuals lacked confidence about their abilities to cope with the course; but as they moved through the customer journey and became more focused on outcomes after training, they were also worried about their ability to manage behaviour in classrooms and concerns about the realities of a teaching career (particularly the long working hours and heavy workload) and teaching can begin to look like a risky option. Lack of confidence was often linked to age and length of time since individuals were last in education (Sections 5.4.8 and 5.4.7).

- Across all the interviews there was a sense that each person had their own story to tell, their own experiences, and individuals often felt that these experiences and their circumstances or preferences were different to the 'norm' and so felt the odd one out. This could affect confidence and motivation to proceed with the application; and the 'outsider' feeling could be amplified by the general information and support provided which appeared to be geared towards 'other' types of people (Section 5.4.8)

Early years ITT findings

Motivations and triggers to early years ITT and teaching careers

- The findings for the sub-sample who had considered an early years ITT programme were similar to those noted above with one or two exceptions:

  - Those who considered and/or applied for an early years teacher training option were particularly likely to consider teaching as a career while already working within the sector (eg in teaching assistant, room leader or nursery manager roles) and many were motivated by a desire for personal and professional development, looking to formalise their experience and increase their employment opportunities (Section 1.6).

  - This group were more strongly motivated by the opportunity to work with and inspire children than those interested in teaching other ages, but were relatively less likely to have been strongly motivated by the opportunity to use specific subject knowledge and skills (Sections 2.3 and 2.4).

- In terms of triggers to consider applying for ITT, the early years sub-group were more likely to be encouraged by availability of funding than those considering other routes (Section 2.5).

- For some there was a blurring between a desire to work with early years or primary aged children (reflected in the spread of their programme choices) and these were generally conceptualised together as 'younger children'. This suggests the distinction made in the sector and in ITT may not be perceived in the same way by potential trainees (Section 2.4).

- Those with a clear preference for early years felt strongly that this was the most important stage in the development of children, they would be easier to manage behaviour, and there would be more freedom in teaching and individual interaction. Some also felt (perhaps wrongly) that early years would provide an easier route into teaching (Section 2.4).

Preferences for early years options and application behaviours

- The most popular early years programmes were early years ITT followed by undergraduate degree course leading to early years teacher status (EYTS). Few considered or applied for School Direct early years programmes (but these are still very new, Section 3.4).

- Those with a preference for early years are more likely than those considering primary or secondary ITT to be women, to consider teaching at a later age (25+), have parent/carer responsibilities, and to have pursued a career in the teaching sector before considering ITT. Most commonly they are working in nursery and pre-school settings with early years age groups eg as nursery assistants/nursery nurses, reception class assistants, room leaders, nursery/preschool/children's centre managers, rather than working with older ages in primary schools (Section 3.2).

- Some individuals want to work with young children and this can span both the early years age range (0 to 5) and the primary age range (3 to 11). Similar numbers considered teaching early years as did teaching primary, and there was considerable overlap in preferences. Thus there are those firmly committed to teaching the under 5's and those not wholly decided between early years and primary (Section 3.2.1).

- There is recognition that early years has become more visible recently with new options for training and professional recognition. However there are concerns that early years does not yet have the same perceived profile and status in the education sector; that policy and practice around early years ITT has changed significantly and may be subject to further (destabilising) changes; and that early years teacher status (EYTS) is still new and experimental. There is a feeling that EYTS has not yet gained widespread traction across schools and nurseries leading to gaps in awareness and uncertainties as to the utility of EYTS for individual career progression and its value to employers (Section 3.5.4).

- Some individuals do weigh up EYTS against primary QTS when making choices about ITT, forming part of considerations about future employability. QTS is generally viewed to offer wider opportunities and flexibilities and provide better career progression than EYTS (Section 3.5.4).

Information, advice and support about early years ITT

- There was no significant difference in the likelihood of receiving support between those who considered and/or applied for early years and those who didn't. However the early years group tended to receive support from fewer sources than other groups of respondents. Universities were a key source of support for early years applicants (often advising them during their applications) as applications tend

to be made directly to institutions; and thus, for many, their only source of help and advice (Section 4.1.1).

- Those considering or applying for early years were significantly less likely than others to have received information about study options. Interviewees considering early years training felt that there was less information available about their training option and that the main information sources were more focused on teaching older age groups. They were also less likely to have received information about the financial support available, help making an application for a course, chance to talk to a newly qualified teacher (NQT) or help with accessing school-based experience. However they were relatively more likely than others to have received training and support with the skills test (something that was ranked as more useful by the early years group than those opting for other ITT, Section 4.2.1).

- Interviewees recognised that the early years sector had undergone a number of changes which led to confusion. They felt that the early years teacher status needed to be better promoted as schools and nurseries (as the employers who could facilitate training) were not necessarily familiar with it, and those considering applying to early years ITT were themselves no longer confident in their understanding of what a qualification would mean in practice and what eligibility criteria they would now have to meet (Section 4.3). Thus a key message from early years interviewees was that they were concerned about the lack of stability in the early years system and would like to see more clarity about the changes (and the implications of the changes for them) and time for the system to bed-in (Section 6.1.4).

Challenges and barriers to early years ITT

- Those making an application to early years programmes had very similar concerns and faced similar challenges to those aiming for primary or secondary teaching. However they were much more likely to fall at the first hurdle in trying to fit training in with their existing commitments, reflecting their profile (female, older, with family responsibilities and an established career), suggesting they need greater flexibilities in provision and support from their employers if already working in the sector. They were also much more concerned about meeting the eligibility criteria and passing the skills tests (reflected in the patterns of support accessed noted above), which were felt to be excessive for working with babies and toddlers. The early years applicants were however relatively less concerned than others about managing classroom behaviour (Section 5.3.1).

- Whether or not a programme led to qualified teacher status (QTS) was an issue and thus a potential barrier for only a small and specific group of early years potential applicants. These tended to be using early years ITT as a way in to teaching or were unsure of whether to specialise in early years or primary. They

could be unaware that early years ITT would not confer QTS and continue with their plans, but some were deterred from making an application (Section 5.4.7).

Areas for Consideration

In conclusion the research highlights how individuals have their own individual experiences of the customer journey: coming to ITT early in their careers soon after university or later in their careers to aid progression or change direction; their own motivations and drivers; their own preferences about which route would suit them best (and fit with their circumstances); and face their own set of challenges which will change as they progress along the journey. This heterogeneity of experiences can make delivering messages to encourage individuals to consider ITT, and providing information and support to help them along the journey difficult for NCTL. Each individual can feel different to what they perceive as the 'normal ITT entrant' and this can affect confidence and motivation to proceed towards an application for ITT. However the rich feedback points to a number of areas for action the NCTL could consider to keep candidates on the decision pathway, reduce barriers to ITT and ensure challenges do not deter applications, and also to amplify the attraction of ITT. These suggestions recognise that not all barriers that individuals face are within the sphere of influence for NCTL and that some of the actions areas have greater resource implications than others and would require further investigation of feasibility, cost and potential for impact.

1: **Tackling financial barriers**: Suggestions here include: raising awareness of the financial support package offered to ITT trainees and the related eligibility criteria; providing personal support where appropriate to help individuals to understand the complexities of funding; and providing clear information on: the true costs of training and how they differ by route and provider, information about other potential sources of finance, and information about likely pay and progression opportunities once qualified. Information will need to be packaged differently for those coming to ITT from different backgrounds. More substantial changes would be to increase the number of School Direct salaried places, and provide free training and financial support for living and childcare costs of trainees.

2: **Tackling lifestyle and location barriers**: Suggestions here include: helping individuals understand the realities of training so they can decide if they have the 'space' to study by providing real life examples of trainees with different backgrounds and circumstances, and the opportunity to talk to real trainees; encouraging providers to communicate in advance the structure of courses and commitment required so individuals can plan work and childcare arrangements; providing timely information about the full range of opportunities available within localities allowing individuals sufficient time to fully research and make their choices; and being ready to re-engage individuals when their circumstances change by keeping in touch with those registered with Get into Teaching but haven't applied. Actions requiring more substantial change could include: exploring where training can be made more flexible, and making flexible options more

visible; and looking at the geographical spread of ITT provision and fill 'cold-spots' to ensure training can be local for individuals wherever they live.

3: **Tackling course accessibility barriers**: Suggestions here include: debunking the myths around eligibility criteria (skills tests, qualification requirements, and work experience required) by clarifying the criteria and related rules and regulations; and providing a clear justification of the eligibility requirements. NCTL could also consider: providing more centres and appointments for skills tests and providing more practice tests online; providing more support to help individuals access schools and nurseries to gain the necessary work experience with self-help guides, lists of contacts, and materials aimed at headteachers to encourage them to be receptive to requests for work experience; providing clearer guidance on how to check for the equivalency of qualifications, and opportunities for those wanting to refresh or refocus their training, and establishing an appeals procedure for those failing the eligibility criteria. Actions requiring more substantial change could be to look at where flexibilities could reasonably be made without compromising real quality requirements.

4: **Tackling informational barriers**: Suggestions here include: providing a trusted one-stop shop with objective, impartial, current and jargon free information that offers both an overview of potential routes but also further detail when required by raising the profile and continuing to adapt the content of the Get Into Teaching website; providing opportunities for more tailored information with a wider range of examples and opportunities to interact with a real person to ask questions and gain feedback; and encouraging providers to be positive, expedient and responsive in their communication with potential ITT candidates throughout the process, including providing information on application progress and constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants, to keep individuals engaged and to feel valued.

5: **Tackling application process barriers**: Suggestions here include: providing more tailored and individual support to those finding the process difficult such as those further from the education system and not used to UCAS, including guidance around the personal statement and gathering references; and providing information on what to expect and how to prepare for interviews and assessment.

6: **Tackling self-confidence and teaching profession barriers**: Suggestions here include recognising that the customer journey is highly individual, personal and extremely varied and thus providing tailored information about options, tailored support taking account of different likely anxieties and challenges of different groups of potential candidates, and a variety of case studies presenting the realities of teaching so individuals can see their own stories reflected in the experiences of others.

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