



Department
for Education

Evaluation of the expansion of funded Early Years Initial Teacher Training

Research report

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Glossary of terms

Abbreviation	Full term
DfE	Department for Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher
EYER	Early Years Education Recovery
EYFS	Early years Foundation Stage
EYITT	Early Years Initial Teacher Training
EYTS	Early Years Teacher Status
GCSE	General Certification of Secondary Education
GLD	Good Level of Development
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SCEYP	Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers
SEND	SEND

Key findings summary

Take-up

- The take-up of funded Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) increased from 348 trainees in 2019/2020 to 582 in 2023/2024.
- The 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years had the highest volume of EYITT take-up, mostly comprised of graduate employment based route trainees (88% in 2022/2023, and 93% in 2023/2024).
- School-centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers experienced higher levels of take-up compared with university-based providers.
- The demographic profile of trainees on EYITT has remained relatively consistent over time.

Improving take-up

- The key challenges that providers faced in expanding their course take-up were:
 - A lack of perceived value of the qualification for career progression, related to not being able to use it to teach reception in LA-maintained schools, and the lack of a specific requirement for having EYTS to work in the early years sector
 - Settings finding it difficult to release staff to take the course
 - Lack of awareness of the course in the sector
 - Restrictions on course eligibility.
- Providers, managers of EYITT trainees, and trainees themselves had many suggestions for how EYITT take-up could be increased. These included:
 - Allowing those with Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) to be able to teach in reception classes in all schools
 - Improving career structures within the sector, linked to increased pay for gaining higher qualifications
 - Making it mandatory for an early years setting to employ at least one member of staff with EYTS
 - Raising employer funding to cover the increasing costs of cover for staff on placements, and / or allowing placements in different parts of the same setting (so that external cover was not required)
 - Creating more flexibility on course start dates

- Improving awareness of the course through a Department for Education campaign.

Experience of the course - skills, knowledge, confidence and practice

- EYITT trainees, managers of EYITT trainees and EYITT providers were positive about the course.
- Most trainees started EYITT with a lot of experience in the sector, and therefore already had relatively high levels of skills, knowledge and confidence. The extent to which trainees 'strongly agreed' with statements related to their own skills, knowledge and confidence, increased between the pre- and post-training surveys.
- Trainees reported using many of the skills they learnt on the course at their setting, and often shared what they learnt on the course with other staff in their setting.
- Trainees and managers reported positive impacts on children within settings which employed early years teachers. For example, some reported improvements in children's personal, social and emotional development as a result of what early years teachers learned on the course. The extent to which trainees 'strongly agreed' they could recognise when a child requires additional support increased between pre and post training surveys.

EYITT and the wider workforce

- The majority of trainees reported that the course helped their career development. The most common change as a result of completing the course was an increase in responsibilities.
- When asked about plans for the next 12 months, nearly half planned to stay in the same role or setting and a third planned to undertake additional early years qualifications.
- The course had limited impact on how people felt about the sector. EYITT trainees were usually highly committed already, and there were both high levels of satisfaction and some frustrations with working in early years, both before and after the course.

Executive summary

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) developed the Early Years Education Recovery (EYER) programme, to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2013, DfE has funded the graduate employment based and graduate entry routes to Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT). ¹The EYER programme increased the number of places that DfE funded for EYITT via these two routes, in the academic years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024.

EYITT is a Level 6 qualification which leads to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), run by universities and school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) organisations. EYITT provides specialist training covering the education and care of children from birth to the age of five and is distinct from primary education. Training is delivered by accredited ITT providers.

Funding is available to the employers of trainees (in the form of an employer incentive) on the employment-based route. Funding is available directly to the trainee (in the form of a bursary) on the graduate entry route. In both routes, DfE pays the course fees. Trainees are eligible for the course if they have a bachelor's degree, alongside a Grade 4 or equivalent GCSE in English, maths, and in some cases, science.

The aim of increasing the number of fully funded EYITT places was to increase the number of early years teachers within the early years workforce, and to increase the number of early years settings with an early years teacher. DfE commissioned IFF Research, an independent research agency, to evaluate the delivery of the increased number of funded EYITT places.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted using the following research methods:

- The development of a Theory of Change (a programme map describing how the programme works and how planned activities will lead to intended outcomes.)
- Baseline and follow-up surveys of two cohorts of EYITT trainees (in the academic years 2022-2023, and 2023-2024).
- Qualitative interviews with EYITT providers, trainees, and managers of those that took the course.

¹ [Early years education recovery programme: supporting the sector - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-years-education-recovery-programme-supporting-the-sector)

- Secondary data analysis of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census, ITT Performance Profiles and the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP).

Take-up of EYITT

The take-up of funded EYITT (graduate employment based and graduate entry routes) increased over time, from 348 trainees in 2019/2020 to 582 in 2023/2024. Whilst 2023/2024 saw the highest volume of take-up, there was still an excess of funded places available which were not taken up. Course take-up for both the graduate entry and graduate employment based routes had previously peaked during the 2020/2021 academic year which was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Take-up was considerably higher for the graduate employment based route (between 307-539 trainees per academic year), compared with the graduate entry route (between 41-77 each academic year). In 2023/2024, trainees on the graduate employment based route accounted for 93% of all funded places, in 2022/2023 this was 88%. As such, the vast majority of trainees had experience working in early years before the course started (94%).

For the last five years of EYITT delivery, the demographic make-up of trainees has remained similar. The course is primarily taken by those who are female, White, and without a disability. The age of trainees has varied considerably throughout the last five years. Anecdotally, some providers reported an increase in international students on graduate entry routes in the past few years.

SCITT providers experienced higher levels of take-up compared with university-based providers. Many university-based providers reported difficulties in maintaining take-up for the course over recent years. SCITTs had not faced this issue and were looking to expand and continue growing.

Improving take-up of EYITT

It was most common for trainees to find out about the course through their employer or manager (32%), or through Google or another search engine (27%). The vast majority (89%) of trainees thought it was easy to find out information about the course.

The most common motivation for trainees taking EYITT was wanting to improve their early years knowledge (66%), followed by being committed to working with early years children (65%), wanting to be more confident in teaching early years (58%), and the fact EYITT is fully funded (58%). When asked to give their main motivation, the most common

response was a commitment to working in the early years sector (24%).² A desire to increase knowledge and skills, alongside a passion and commitment to the sector were strong motivations reported during the qualitative interviews.

Using EYITT to get a promotion or build career progression was cited by 56% of trainees as a reason for taking the course, however in the qualitative interviews this was seen as an additional benefit, rather than the sole reason for taking EYITT. The availability of employer funding was a key motivator for settings to allow their staff to attend EYITT, because it allowed them to pay for cover staff during placements, alongside gaining a more knowledgeable and confident staff member as a result of the training.

Providers, trainees and managers were asked whether there were any challenges that could restrict take-up of the course, and how these could be addressed. Table 1 summarises these challenges and associated solutions (as suggested by those taking part in the research).

² Respondents were asked which of any of the options motivated them. For respondents that gave more than one answer, they were asked to select one as their main motivation.

Table 1. Participants' views on challenges and suggested solutions to increasing take-up

Challenges	Suggested solutions
A lack of perceived value of the qualification for career progression, in particular, not being able to use it to teach reception class in LA-maintained schools, and the lack of requirement for the qualification, to work or progress in the early years sector.	<p>Increasing pay in the early years sector.</p> <p>Professionalising the sector, for example with more structured progression pathways linked to achieving higher qualifications.</p> <p>Allowing those with EYTS to be able to teach in reception classes in all schools.</p> <p>Making EYTS mandatory for all nursery settings.</p>
Difficulty for settings to release staff to take the course.	<p>Increasing employer funding.</p> <p>Permitting placements to happen within a different part of the same setting e.g. working with a different age group to usual.</p> <p>Creating more flexibility on course start dates.</p>
Lack of awareness of the course in the sector.	DfE to raise awareness of the course.

There were also challenges with course eligibility requirements related to the GCSE requirements, the requirement of equivalency tests, scarcity of local EYITT options, course drop out, and challenges taking the course as a childminder.

Experience of the course - skills, knowledge, confidence and practice

EYITT trainees, managers of EYITT trainees and EYITT providers were positive about the course. Trainees were very positive about their experience and had introduced changes to both their practice and within their setting, as a result of completing the course. Most trainees were satisfied with the support they received from their provider during the course.

The most valuable element of the course was the practical work / employment or placements (77%), followed by classroom learning (60%).

Most trainees started EYITT with a lot of experience in the sector, and therefore relatively high levels of confidence, knowledge and skills. Both the qualitative and survey data showed an increase in confidence when comparing the start and end of the course. For example, 38% of trainees strongly agreed before the course that they were confident in leading appropriate activities for typically developing 2 to 5 year olds. This rose to 22 out of 27 trainees after the training.

Whilst trainee knowledge began at a relatively high level, trainees reported the course helped to reinforce what they already knew and filled gaps in their existing knowledge. For example, 28% of trainees strongly agreed they had a good awareness of early learning and the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS). This increased to 24 out of 30 who strongly agreed in the follow up survey. Trainees also reported an increase in understanding appropriate strategies to support children's early language and communication development and understanding of how babies and children learn and develop. There was also a reported increase in knowledge and skills related to safeguarding and promoting welfare, planning education and care which took needs into account, and fulfilling wider professional responsibilities.

The vast majority of trainees reported that since the course, they have been able to apply their learning to their role. For example, 98% reported they can inspire, motivate and challenge all children, and 91% were able to promote good progress and outcomes among children.

Trainees often shared what they learnt on the course with other staff in their setting. This was through formal training or showing other members of staff how to do something in day-to-date practice. Managers valued trainees' ability to use and share the most up to date research-informed practice in their setting.

Trainees reported a positive impact on children within settings. Almost nine-in-ten (88%) trainees reported that the personal, social and emotional development of children at their setting had improved as a result of what they had learnt on the course. Trainees and managers were able to give specific examples of how the course had impacted the children in their setting. For example, the improvement of care and education for specific children (e.g. with Special Educational Needs), alongside trainees refreshing or adapting areas of the curriculum based on knowledge they had gained from their EYITT course.

EYITT and the wider workforce

Across Early Years settings, the number of staff with Level 6 qualifications³ remained relatively steady between 2021 and 2023. Childminders (9% in 2021, 10% in 2022, and 10% in 2023) and group-based settings (GBPs) (11% across all three years) remained

³ By Level 6 qualification in this report, we mean those that hold an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 6 or higher

relatively consistent, whilst school based providers (SBPs) experienced an increase from 32% in 2021 to 38% in 2023.

The majority of trainees worked in the same setting after their course (38% were in the same role, and 38% were in a new role in the same setting). Around one-in-ten were in a different setting in a similar role, with a similar proportion in a different setting in a different role (11% for both). Taken together, this does mean that the nature of employment changed for around 60% of trainees who were either in a new role, a new setting, or both, after their course.

The majority of trainees felt the EYITT course helped their career development (85%), although this was more nuanced in qualitative findings. Whilst they acknowledged the benefits, such as positive impact on their skills, some felt they could have progressed similarly with a Level 3 qualification as completing the EYITT is not a requirement.

Most trainees reported at least one type of positive change as a result of completing the course, such as an increase in responsibilities (41%), followed by improved job satisfaction (37%), an increase in pay (37%) and having received a promotion (30%). Just under a third did not notice any changes or benefits (30%). Similar outcomes were reported in the qualitative research, where some trainees reported increased responsibilities.

Trainees were largely very experienced, with nearly half of the trainees having over 5 years' experience (47%). When asked about their plans for the next 12 months, it was most common (49%) that trainees planned to stay in the same setting or role, and one-third (35%) planned to do further qualifications.

Trainees who took part in the surveys⁴ reported high levels of satisfaction and frustration with working in the sector in equal measure, and a substantial minority still thought about leaving the sector after completing their qualification. This was mainly related to factors such as pay, rather than enjoyment of the role. In the qualitative interviews, some trainees did report increased satisfaction with their role and with working in early years, as a result of completing their course, which was related to improved job quality and progression, sometimes but not always accompanied by increased pay.

Data from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) was used to assess the qualification levels of staff that left their setting. A third (34%) of those leaving SBPs held an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 6 or higher, and 11% of those leaving GBPs held this type of qualification. Over half of those who left GBPs had Level 3 as their highest qualification (57%), and the same applied to 42% of the staff who left SBPs. These findings are proportional to the qualification levels of the total

⁴ Cohort 2 surveys, in which a before training and follow up survey were conducted.

number of staff and therefore do not indicate a disproportionate number of staff leaving the sector at a certain qualification level.

Managers highlighted recruitment for Level 6 positions as challenging. Whilst managers were interested in employing staff with a Level 6 qualification (EYTS in particular), as they valued the qualification, they found there were a limited number of people that held this level of qualifications. Therefore, managers were more likely to employ those with a Level 3 qualification.

Conclusions

The number of trainees who took up EYITT increased during the same time period that DfE increased the number of funded places. Filling places was a bigger challenge for university providers, whereas SCITTs were able to fill their courses with greater ease. The intended short-term outcome of an increased number of Early Years Teachers within the early years workforce, and an increased number of settings with a graduate, has been partially realised. The majority of trainees stayed in the same setting they were in before training, which tended to be PVLs, but impacts on retention in the sector are unclear based on the currently available data.

Providers identified various challenges and suggestions for increasing take up of the course, relating to wider sector issues, and issues related more closely to the course. Challenges included difficulties releasing staff onto the course, pay in the sector, course eligibility, the perceived lack of value of the qualification for progression, and a lack of awareness about the course. Suggested solutions to these challenges put forward by research participants included increasing pay in the sector, increasing employer funding, and DfE raising awareness of the course.

Studying EYITT led to positive improvements in many trainees' skills, knowledge, confidence and practice, although many started from a strong starting point, due to their experience in the sector. Many trainees went on to make positive improvements for their settings, other members of staff, and the children they work with.

Introduction and methodology

Background and context

In order to help address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Education (DfE) developed the Early Years Education Recovery (EYER) programme. The EYER is a package of training, qualifications, expert guidance and targeted support for the early years sector to support learning and recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the youngest and most disadvantaged children. As a part of the programme, DfE committed £153 million for the development of high-quality professional development of early years practitioners. One element of this was the funding of additional places for Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) courses.

What is EYITT?

EYITT is a Level 6 qualification. Completing EYITT leads to gaining early years teacher status (EYTS). Those with EYTS are able to work in ratios of 1 adult to 13 children for children aged three and over, as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework (EYFS).⁵ EYTS is different to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and is designed for those who work with children aged 0-5.

Early years teachers with EYTS are not eligible for the QTS award and are therefore not qualified to lead classes in a LA-maintained nursery or school, unless they also hold QTS. Trainees with EYTS can work as Level 3 support workers in a maintained nursery or school. They can work as unqualified teachers in maintained schools or academies, but this status is dependent on the school. Early years teachers can lead teaching in all other early years settings in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.⁶

EYITT is delivered by universities and SCITTs (school centred initial teacher training organisations). There were 17 providers who delivered in 2022-23 and 15 providers who delivered in 2023-24. Throughout this report, they are referred to as 'EYITT providers'.

Routes into EYITT

There are four training routes available⁷:

- **Graduate entry:** for graduates not in employment in an early years setting.

⁵ [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

⁶ [Education \(Specified Work\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

⁷ For more information about the specific routes into EYITT, see here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64c38141331a650014934dc7/230726_EYITT_requesting_places_and_allocations_methodology_for_2024_to_2025_.pdf

- **Graduate employment based:** for graduates in paid employment, working in an early years setting.
- **Undergraduate:** for those studying for a full-time degree (three or four year-long) in an early childhood-related subject.
- **Assessment only:** for experienced practitioners (who may have gained qualifications overseas).

Since 2013, DfE has funded the graduate employment based and graduate entry routes to EYITT. As part of the EYER, DfE increased the number of funded places available of the graduate entry and graduate employment based routes. In the rest of this report, when the term 'EYITT' is used, it refers to the graduate entry and graduate employment based routes.

Funding available to trainees and settings

DfE provide training bursaries, training grants and employer incentives, to attract high-quality graduates to become early years teachers.

For trainees on the graduate employment based route, there is a £7,000 training grant paid to the EYITT provider, to meet all training costs for each trainee. There is also a £7,000 employer incentive for the trainee's employer. The employer incentive was introduced to cover costs that employers of trainees may incur whilst the trainee is on the course, including supply cover, salary enhancement, employment costs, National Insurance and additional training costs and other overheads.⁸

For trainees on the graduate entry route, the £7,000 training grant is also in place for the provider. There is also a bursary available for trainees, based on the class of their degree:

- First class degree or doctorate: £5,000
- 2:1 degree or Masters: £4,000
- 2:2 degree: £3,000

Course eligibility

The full entry requirements for EYITT trainees can be found in '[Early years initial teacher training \(EYITT\): criteria and supporting advice](#)'. To summarise, EYITT providers must ensure that all trainees:

- have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade 4 in the GCSE examinations in English and maths and ensure that those who intend to train to teach pupils aged

⁸ [Early years initial teacher training: 2024 to 2025 funding guidance - GOV.UK](#)

3 to 11 additionally have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade 4 in the GCSE examination in a science subject.

- have a bachelor's degree of a UK higher education institution or equivalent qualification.

EYITT providers must also ensure that all trainees have taken part in a rigorous selection process designed to assess their suitability to train to teach.

Aims of the increased funding

The aim of increasing the number of fully funded EYITT places was to increase the number of graduates within the early years workforce and increase the number of early years settings with a graduate. Higher staff qualification levels have been shown to be associated with higher quality provision and better child outcomes⁹.

More specifically, observational research has identified a positive association between the presence of degree-qualified staff in settings (including EYTS – achieved through EYITT), and children's outcomes as measured at age five by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (particularly communication and maths), and that this is sustained over time through Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2)¹⁰. DfE also aimed to increase recruitment and retention of staff in the sector.

Research aims

In April 2023, DfE commissioned IFF Research, an independent research agency, to evaluate the effectiveness of the increased number of funded EYITT places. More specifically, the aims of the evaluation were:

- to understand how take-up of EYITT places could be improved;
- to understand the outcomes of increased funding for places; and
- to gather data for the wider EYER programme evaluation.

The research questions were:

- Did the number of graduates in the sector increase following introduction of increased EYITT funding?
- What variation is there in take-up of EYITT?

⁹ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons., P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project technical paper 12: The final report-effective pre-school education. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10005308/1/EPPE12Sylva2004Effective.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid

- How could take-up of EYITT places be improved?
- Did EYITT trainees report changes in their skills, knowledge, confidence and practice?
- Does increased funding for EYITT places impact vacancies and turnover in the EY workforce?

Methodology

Theory of Change development

IFF Research facilitated a workshop with DfE in May 2023, to develop a Theory of Change for the policy. The workshop was preceded by three scoping interviews with key sector stakeholders, including policy leads within DfE and representatives of early years sector bodies. In this workshop, IFF Research developed an initial Theory of Change, working backwards from the end goals to the planned inputs and activities, and discussing assumptions and possible unintended consequences that underpinned thinking. The Theory of Change is included in the Annex to this report, including detail on the inputs, activities, short-term and mid-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes/impacts.

The outcomes within the Theory of Change were split between short-term (realised within 1 year of graduation) and mid-term (realised onwards of 1 year from graduation). Short-term outcomes for EYITT trainees include increased confidence, knowledge and skills. Mid-term for the sector include increased take-up of EYITT, an increased number of graduates within the early years workforce, and an increased number of settings with a graduate. The mechanisms that underpinned the realisation of these outcomes were:

- Individuals, settings and the sector are motivated for trainees to complete EYITT
- EYITT providers have what they need to deliver courses (e.g. tutors/placements)
- EYITT trainees graduate from their EYITT course at an EYITT provider and improve their knowledge/skills
- Trainees have the opportunity to apply their knowledge whilst they are learning
- Settings can find cover for their staff on the EYITT course

Once the Theory of Change was agreed in Summer 2023, it was used to underpin the design of research tools, and the approach to analysis. The Theory of Change was reviewed frequently throughout the course of the evaluation, to inform the researchers' understanding of the policy and to understand whether the policy was working as intended.

Use of cohorts in survey and interview methodology

The evaluation consisted of surveys and interviews with multiple groups, including EYITT providers, trainees and their managers. The surveys were conducted with two cohorts of EYITT trainees, as detailed in Table 1.1. Both cohorts only included those completing the funded EYITT routes (i.e. the graduate entry route or the graduate employment based route).

Table 1.1: Cohort composition

	Composition
Cohort 1	Trainees conducting EYITT during 2022/2023 academic year
Cohort 2	Trainees conducting EYITT during 2023/2024 academic year

Quantitative surveys

IFF Research conducted surveys of each cohort, at two points. Table 1.2 shows the dates these surveys took place and how the findings from these surveys are referred to throughout this report.

Table 1.2: Fieldwork periods for each survey

Survey name	Academic year of trainees	Survey timeframe
Cohort 1 End of Training	2022/2023	29 June 2023 - 31 July 2023
Cohort 1 Follow up	2022/2023	16 October 2023 - 15 November 2023
Cohort 2 Baseline	2023/2024	13 September 2023 - 22 March 2024 ¹¹
Cohort 2 Follow up	2023/2024	4 September 2024 - 13 October 2024

Cohort 1

Cohort 1 trainees were asked to complete two surveys, an ‘end of training’ survey and a ‘follow-up’ survey. An ‘end of training’ survey was used as the baseline for Cohort 1, as opposed to a ‘pre-training’ survey, because the EYITT course for Cohort 1 was already underway when the evaluation was commissioned. For this reason, data analysed in the

¹¹ For those starting in September 2023, the fieldwork period was 13 September 2023 to the 12th November 2023. For those starting in January 2024, the fieldwork period was 27 January to 22 March 2024.

findings chapters of this report typically refer to Cohort 2 data, which had a more accurate and robust baseline.

The Cohort 1 end of training survey covered questions about the trainee's course, the application process, and the trainees perceived impact of the course on their skills and knowledge.

The Cohort 1 end of training survey was circulated directly to trainees, via an email invite, by the 17 participating EYITT providers in 2022/2023. Prior to this email invite, DfE sent each provider details about the evaluation and what would be required of them. The 17 providers consisted of 4 SCITT providers, one education trust and 12 universities offering EYITT. All providers were asked to send the invite to the relevant trainees, defined as those completing a graduate entry route or graduate employment based route in the 2022/23 academic year. Providers were also asked to distribute general reminders throughout fieldwork. The survey was hosted by IFF Research, so providers had no access to the data and did not know which of their trainees had taken part.

The Cohort 1 follow up survey covered questions about their current employment and career plans, as well as how they have used the skills and knowledge, they gained from the EYITT course.

The response rates for Cohort 1 surveys are included in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Response rates for both Cohort 1 surveys

	Total sample size	No. of responses	Response rate (%)
Cohort 1 End of Training	488	163 ¹²	33%
Cohort 1 Follow up	117 ¹³	31	27%

The demographics of the trainees who completed Cohort 1 End of Training and Cohort 1 Follow up surveys are included in the Annex.

Cohort 2

A similar process was followed for Cohort 2. For the baseline survey, however, fieldwork was split into two periods of data collection. Firstly, baseline fieldwork was conducted with those who had started their EYITT course in September 2023. A second wave of

¹² A total of 166 trainees responded to the Cohort 1 end of training survey, however, three records were removed as they reported that they were not graduate entry or graduate employment based and were therefore outside of scope.

¹³ The sample of 117 trainees included all who were willing to be recontacted for the follow up survey when asked at the end of the Cohort 1 end of training and who provided viable contact details.

baseline fieldwork took place with those who started their EYITT course in January 2024. Including those who started their course in January 2024 helped to increase the volume of baseline data.

A follow-up survey was then conducted with those who started their course in September 2023. Follow-up data was not gathered for those starting their EYITT course in January 2024, as their course had not yet finished. The response rates for Cohort 2 surveys are shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Response rates for both Cohort 2 surveys

	Total sample size	No. of responses	Response rate (%)
Cohort 2 Baseline	N/A ¹⁴	161 ¹⁵	N/A
Cohort 2 Follow up	80 ¹⁶	30 ¹⁷	38%

The demographics of the trainees who completed the Cohort 2 surveys are included in Annex.

Trainees who took part in the Cohort 1 Follow up and Cohort 2 Follow up surveys were asked for their workplace postcode. This data was used to identify the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) of the area in which they work, which acts as a measure of deprivation. The breakdown of this index, from most deprived to least deprived is included in the Annex.

Interpreting survey data

Findings from both the follow-up surveys are based on a small number of responses and should therefore be treated with caution. In instances where the base size is below 30, the data are reported as whole numbers, rather than percentages.

In some cases, the data from Cohort 1 end of training and Cohort 2 baseline surveys, and for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 follow up surveys, has been merged to create a more

¹⁴ Due to the timing of the survey and the availability of finalised management information on EYITT trainees, the total number of trainees in the September 2023 entry could not be confirmed.

¹⁵ A total of 165 completed the Cohort 2 baseline survey, however, four responses were removed during the analysis stage as they were not graduate entry or graduate employment based trainees and were therefore outside of scope.

¹⁶ A total of 80 completed the Cohort 2 baseline survey from the September 2023 intake and were willing to be recontacted for the follow up survey. Follow-up invitations were not sent to those in the January 2024 intake.

¹⁷ A total of 31 completed the Cohort 2 follow up survey however, one record was removed during the analysis stage as they were not graduate entry or graduate employment based trainees and were therefore outside of scope.

robust base size for analysis. Where this has been carried out, it is specified in the text or in footnotes.

In survey research, weighting may be used to ensure that the achieved sample of participants is representative of the population. Any weighting that is applied carries with it a 'design effect' which can reduce the statistical reliability of the data by reducing the effective sample size. In the case of these surveys, weighting has not been applied as there is limited profile data on the population and the base sizes are relatively small. The demographic profile by age and gender suggests that the survey is representative by those factors. For consistency, people who took part in the surveys are referred to as 'trainees' throughout this report, although by the time they completed the follow-up surveys they had finished their course. In some places, they are also referred to as early years teachers, for once they graduated and are in the workforce.

Qualitative interviews

IFF Research conducted qualitative interviews during the scoping phase to inform the Theory of Change development. IFF Research also conducted qualitative interviews during both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 fieldwork. Qualitative interviews helped to add context to the quantitative data and deepen insights into the way that EYITT worked. As shown in Table 1.5, qualitative interviews were carried out with stakeholders, trainees, providers and managers. Getting in-depth views not only from trainees, but also from managers and providers provided a holistic view of the impact of the increased number of funded places, and what helped or impeded course recruitment. Table 1.5 shows the timing and number of interviews conducted with each audience.

Table 1.5: Time periods and number of qualitative interviews conducted

Audience	Time period	Number of interviews conducted
Stakeholders	May 2023	3
Cohort 1 trainees	January 2024 – February 2024	5
Cohort 2 trainees	October 2024	14
Managers of EYITT trainees	October 2024 – November 2024	5
EYITT providers	September 2024 – October 2024	12
Total number of interviews		39

Recruitment for qualitative interviews

Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 trainees who agreed to be recontacted for follow up research were recruited to take part in 45-minute qualitative interviews. Although they were interviewed after they had completed EYITT, they are referred to as ‘trainees’ throughout this report.

Course leaders / managers who worked at EYITT providers were recruited to take part in 45-minute interviews, using contact details provided by the DfE. Throughout analysis, providers fell into two main groups; university-based providers and School Centred Initial Teacher Training based providers (SCITT-based providers). Whilst there were more university-based providers offering EYITT courses compared to SCITT-based providers, the latter accounted for the majority of places within the overall EYITT cohort. IFF Research interviewed course leaders/managers based across four SCITTs and eight universities. This audience are referred to as ‘providers’ throughout this report.

Early years managers of 2022/2023 or 2023/2024 EYITT trainees were recruited using a snowball method, utilising contacts via providers and trainees. They took part in 45-minute interviews. This audience are referred to as ‘EYITT managers’ throughout this report.

Secondary data analysis

To inform the context of the report, IFF Research examined secondary data sources available. This included the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Performance Profiles and the ITT Census, both collected by DfE. The ITT Census contains year-on-year take-up data for all ITT courses and includes the demographics of trainees. This was used to understand take-up of EYITT over time. The ITT Performance Profiles chart course completion (rather than take-up. ITT Census data is taken in October of any given year and therefore provides a good platform to analyse the make-up of each cohort. Analysis of the ITT Census is used predominantly in Chapter 2 which focuses on course take-up and trainee demographics.

As part of this research, IFF Research also examined data from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP)¹⁸. This survey is commissioned every year by DfE and includes insights into childcare and early years provision and the challenges that providers face. This survey covers group-based providers (GBPs), school-based providers (SBPs) and childminders across England¹⁹. SCEYP data was used to explore the qualifications held by staff at different early years providers. This analysis is predominantly explored in Chapter 5 which focuses on the wider workforce.

¹⁸ For more information on this survey, as well as the methodology used, please visit [Childcare and early years provider survey, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁹ It is important to note, that this survey does not reach all early year's settings across England.

Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 focussed on trends in the volume of EYITT and looks at whether increased funding has impacted take-up. It goes on to consider whether there is variation in take-up by entry route, provider type or demographics. The chapter aims to address the research questions 'did the number of graduates in the sector increase following the introduction of increased EYITT funding?' and 'what variation is there in the take-up of EYITT?'.

Chapter 3 covers how the take-up of EYITT places could be improved, drawing on responses from all audiences involved in the research. This chapter explores the motivations and barriers to EYITT take-up for graduates, current challenges in place for providers to increase their take up, and perspectives from those that took part in the research on how to address these challenges. This chapter aims to address the research question of 'how could take-up of EYITT places be improved?'.

Chapter 4 describes the experience of those taking the EYITT course. This chapter explores self-reported changes to skills, knowledge, confidence and practice among trainees who had completed EYITT, as well as their overall experiences of the course. It also covers whether graduates perceive that they are now better able to provide support for children with communication and language development, and any perceived improvement in outcomes among children in their setting as a result of the course. This chapter covers the research question asking whether EYITT trainees reported changes in their skills, knowledge, confidence and practice as result of EYITT.

Chapter 5 looks at prevalence of qualified practitioners in the sector and the impact this is having on staff retention and turnover. It also looks at destinations of trainees once they complete the course, and their commitment of the workforce. This chapter covers the research question asking whether increased funding for EYITT places impacts vacancies and turnover in the EY workforce, and research question 1a, whether the number of graduates in the sector increased, following the introduction of increased EYITT funding.

Take-up of Early Years Initial Teacher Training

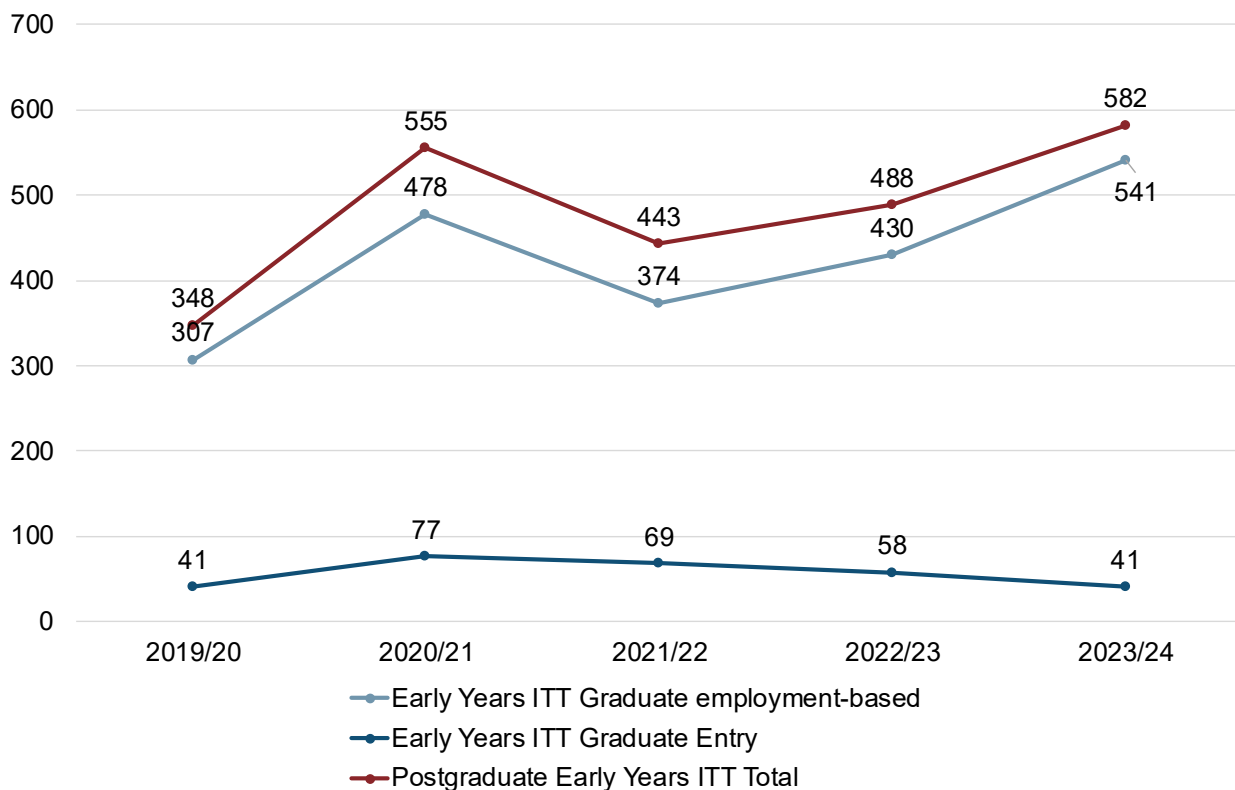
Key findings

- The take-up of funded Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) increased from 348 trainees in 2019/2020, to 582 in 2023/2024.
- The 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years had the highest volume of EYITT take-up, mostly comprised of trainees on graduate employment based routes (88% in 2022/2023, and 93% in 2023/2024).
- School-centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers experienced higher levels of take-up compared with university-based providers.
- The demographic profile of trainees on EYITT has remained relatively consistent over time.

Historic course take-up

The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census contains year-on-year take-up data for all ITT courses and includes the demographics of trainees. Figure 2-1 shows the take-up of postgraduate EYITT routes within the scope of this study, the graduate entry, and graduate employment based routes. Course take-up for these routes increased 19% between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years, from 488 to 582. Course take-up for both the graduate entry and graduate employment based routes had previously peaked at 555 during the 2020/21 academic year which was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2-1 EYITT course take-up between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years



Source: ITT Census [Initial Teacher Training Census, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

The 2023/2024 academic year saw the highest volume of trainees in the past five academic years (582). Whilst take-up on the graduate employment based route has been increasing over the past two years (25% increase between 2022/23 and 2023/24), take-up on the graduate entry route has been steadily declining since 2021/22. In 2023/2024, trainees on the graduate employment based route accounted for 93% of all funded places, in 2022/2023 this was 88%.

Take-up of the graduate entry route decreased by 29% between 2022/23 and 2023/24 down to 41 trainees.

Variation in take-up by demographics

There has been little change in the demographic make-up of trainees on graduate entry and graduate employment based EYITT courses in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, compared with previous academic years. For the previous five academic years, the course is taken primarily by women, who are White, and do not have a disability.

The age profile of trainees taking the course has changed over time. In the 2019/2020 cohort, just over three-quarters (76%) of the cohort were aged under 25, however, since then, this has shifted so that the majority of trainees are 25 or over (81% in the 2023/2024 academic year. Between the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years, there was a continued decrease in those under the age of 25 (23% to 19%). This could be explained by a greater proportion of trainees undertaking the employment based route.²⁰

Those in employment are likely to be older than those on the graduate entry route, so a decline in uptake for the graduate entry alongside an increase in those taking the employment based route might be behind this shift in demographics. A detailed breakdown of the figures for each academic year can be found in the Annex.

The majority of trainees taking the course are female (for example, 94% in the 2023/24 academic year). The percentage of each cohort since 2019/20 identifying as male has remained consistent at between 3% and 4%. A full breakdown by sex can be found in the Annex.

The percentage of those reporting to have a disability remained consistent at around one-in-ten across the five academic years. This can be seen in full in the Annex.

The majority of EYITT trainees are White, which until the 2023/24 academic year had made up between 81% and 87% of the overall cohort. This dropped to 78% in the 2023/24 academic year. Asian trainees represented 13% of the 2023/24 cohort and Black / African / Caribbean / Black British trainees represented 5% of the cohort. A full breakdown can be found in the Annex.

Variation by trainee setting type

Trainees were asked about whether they were working in a setting alongside completing the course. Over nine-in-ten (92%) said that they were, and 8% said they were not.

Two-thirds (66%) of trainees who worked alongside completing their course worked in a Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) setting. This was followed by working in a school nursery setting (18%). A full breakdown is shown in Table 2.1.

²⁰ Source: ITT Census Data – downloaded 05/12/2024: Initial Teacher Training Census, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

Table 2.1: Breakdown of EYITT trainees by where they worked while undertaking the course

Setting type	Percentage of trainees who said they worked at each type of setting
Private, voluntary or independent nursery (operating on a non-domestic premises)	66%
Nursery in a school (including maintained nursery schools)	18%
Reception year in a primary school	11%
Childminder	<1%
Other type of setting	4%
Prefer not to say	<1%

Source: A4 Which of the following best describes the type of setting you currently work in? Cohort 1 End of Training and Cohort 2 Baseline who work in an early years setting (299)

Variation by trainee experience level

When looking at the experience level of those taking part in EYITT, the majority (94%) already had experience working in the early years. Six-in-ten (59%) had more than three years of experience in the early years sector before starting the course. Almost half (47%) of EYITT trainees had been working in the early years sector for more than five years. Just under a quarter (23%) said that they had one to three years' experience. A full breakdown of trainees by level of experience is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Breakdown of EYITT trainees by length of time in the EY sector

Experience of working in the EY sector	Percentage of trainees who said they worked for that length of time in EY
No experience	6%
Less than one year	11%
Between one and three years	23%
More than three years, up to five years	12%
More than five years	47%
Prefer not to say	1%

Source: A5 How much, if any, experience do you have working in early years? Cohort 1 End of Training and Cohort 2 Baseline (324)

Variation in take-up by provider type

Interviews with EYITT providers and trainees highlighted reported different trends in course take-up between university-based providers and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITTs) providers.

Many university-based providers reported they had struggled to maintain their pre-COVID levels of course take-up over recent years. Typical course sizes ranged between 5 and 20 trainees per university-based provider. Prior to the pandemic, some university-based providers reported having upwards of 20 trainees in each cohort, however some experienced a decrease in numbers during the pandemic.

SCITT providers tended to have larger cohorts, and most had experienced an increase in take up over recent years. They were able to identify challenges to increasing their take-up further, which were often similar to challenges identified by universities. However, the size and scale of their organisational reach meant that they still were able to recruit a large number of trainees, despite these challenges. Chapter 3 explores the reason for varying levels of take up, and barriers to increasing take up.

University-based providers

Some university-based providers were concerned that low take-up was influencing their ability to run the course. Several course leaders in universities said they were running close to the minimum level required for the course to be financially viable. More detail about why some university-based providers were struggling to increase their take-up is covered in Chapter 3.

“I haven't ever hit the minimum, but I think I'm pretty close to not being viable with the numbers I've got this year” – EYITT provider

Most university-based providers wanted to increase their capacity and bid for more places. However, many were struggling to fill the number of places they currently had. One university-based provider thought it would reflect badly if they bid for more places without filling them.

“You know the DfE have always approached us, probably a couple of times each year, to say that they've increased their numbers and we can compete for more places, but actually that wouldn't have been in our benefit because it wouldn't show our sustainability of our course if we're saying that we want more places, but we don't recruit to them. So we've had to keep it quite low to be mindful of filling those places really.” – EYITT provider

Whilst take-up has been declining over recent years for some university-based providers, they were reluctant to stop offering the course. Many courses had been running for a considerable amount of time, and the staff delivering the course saw the value of the course for the trainees and the sector. Many of the staff delivering the course had built relationships with settings and trainees, that they wanted to preserve.

In order to keep the course running, a few universities were devising solutions. For example, to improve efficiency, a few universities reported that they were sharing resources between their EYITT course and other courses. This meant they were able to continue delivering EYITT because, whilst the EYITT course was running at a loss, delivering ITT overall remained financially sustainable. When asked about departmental support for EYITT, most university-based providers said that the course had a strong backing and that they did not want to lose it from their offer.

SCITT providers

Interviews with SCITT-based providers revealed more positive findings about EYITT take-up. SCITT providers represent a majority share of EYITT places and trainees. SCITTs were generally optimistic about their recent EYITT take-up rates, and a few felt they had a greater capacity to deliver, than the number of places they were currently allocated. SCITTs that operate at a national level had seen their cohort sizes for EYITT grow over the last few years.

One SCITT noted that during the pandemic, they were able to adapt quickly to online learning as they had already been offering it (whilst some university providers struggled during COVID-19 to maintain their take-up levels). This particular SCITT felt they were successfully increasing their take-up as they offered the flexibility of at home study, rather than studying in person.

As the numbers of trainees attending university-based providers has been decreasing, SCITTs shared they were able to increase their take-up in those areas. One SCITT-based provider monitored where demand was increasing around the country and was easily able to increase its resources (i.e. by expanding the number of staff and placement settings) where need was identified. National-level SCITT providers said that they worked with large nursery chains which meant that they did not have to make individual new connections with smaller settings.

“We’ve been able to mobilise into areas where other providers have stepped back and that’s why we’ve been able to build this team of people”. – EYITT provider

“We do have employed tutors and employed staff, but we also have a bank of associates, so we've probably got about 150 associates nationally working for us on different elements of the programme. So again, that allows us to be flexible, but it enables us to sort of be nimble where there's been a spike in a particular region” – EYITT provider

One SCITT was confident enough in volumes to be able to successfully run an additional cohort starting from January 2024. They were initially concerned that it might impact the number of trainees signing up to the course in September, but they said that this had not been the case.

International students

Another variation in take-up that emerged from a few qualitative interviews with university-based providers and SCITT providers was an anecdotal increase in the number of international students taking part in the EYITT course. It is not possible to determine this from the data held in the ITT Census.

When screening applications, one university-based provider said that they looked in detail at what experience or qualifications international students have before accepting them onto the course.

University-providers that had seen an increase in international students had experienced financial benefits, as international students pay higher fees. One university-based provider felt they were able to keep the course running on lower numbers of trainees but with the same financial outcomes. One university also said that they developed a course that ran alongside the EYITT course, offering an academic Master's degree rather than EYTS accreditation, which was targeted at attracting international students.

“We use [international students] to effectively prop up and remain financially viable. Fifteen is the minimum number of students the university will tolerate, and we dipped below that minimum last year, but it didn't matter because we had 12 international students [on the Master's course] that brought our cohort up over 25 with each one counting as three [in terms of the fees they pay]. So as far as the university was concerned, we had 40 plus on roll.” – EYITT provider

Improving take-up of Early Years Initial Teacher Training

Key findings

The key challenges that providers faced in further increasing take-up were:

- A lack of perceived value of the qualification for career progression, related to the lack of a specific requirement for having EYTS, to work in the early years sector, and not being able to use the qualification to teach reception in LA-maintained schools
- Difficulty for settings to release staff to take the course
- Lack of awareness of the course in the sector
- Restrictions on course eligibility, relating to GCSE requirements.

Providers, managers of EYITT trainees, and trainees themselves had many suggestions for how EYITT take-up could be increased. These included:

- Allowing those with Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) to be able to teach in reception classes in all schools
- Improving career structures within the sector, linked to increased pay for gaining higher qualifications
- Making it mandatory for an early years setting to employ at least one member of staff with EYTS
- Raising employer funding to cover the increasing costs of cover for staff on placements, and / or allowing placements in different parts of the same setting (so that external cover was not required)
- Creating more flexibility on course start dates
- Improving awareness of the course through a Department for Education campaign.

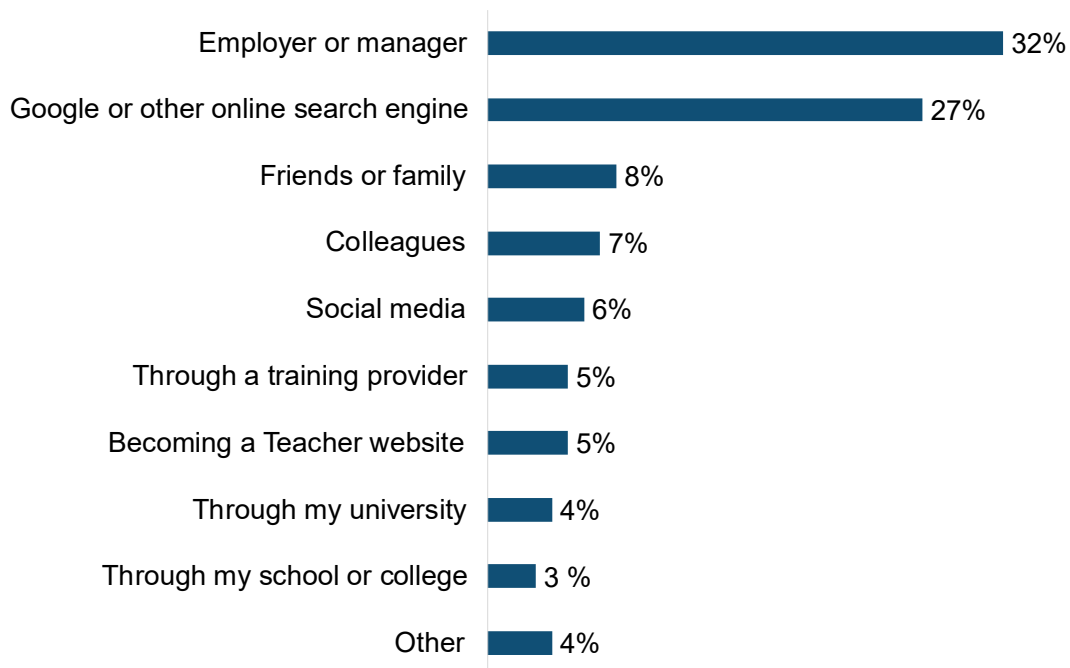
Trainees' motivations for taking part in EYITT

Finding about the course

The most common way trainees first heard about EYITT was via their manager or employer (32%)²¹. This was followed by Google and other online search engines (27%). Other less common ways trainees heard about the course was through friends and family (8%), colleagues (7%), or social media (6%), as shown in Figure 3-1.

²¹ All data related to the way in which graduates heard about EYITT is taken from Cohort 1 end of training survey and Cohort 2 baseline survey combined.

Figure 3-1 How trainees first heard about EYITT



Source: B1. How did you first hear about the Early Years Initial Teacher Training course? Cohort 1 End of Training and Cohort 2 Baseline (324)

In the qualitative interviews, EYITT providers noted that they often focussed their marketing efforts on employers, specifically nursery managers. This was via direct contact, for example by telephone, emails, or setting visits. This aligned with the survey findings, whereby almost one-third of trainees (32%) found out about their course through their employer or manager.

Trainees reported that information about the course was generally easy to find. At the beginning of the course, 89% of trainees reported it was 'very easy' or 'quite easy'. Only 11% reported it was either 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to find information about the course. During the qualitative interviews, multiple trainees commented on the good quality of information available from individual providers, either via their websites, or via direct communication (e.g. emails) with staff.

"The website I thought was really good and really informative...the contact [at the provider] was really helpful and could go over all my questions with me." – *EYITT trainee*

Applying for the course

Trainees reported differing course application experiences. However, the majority of trainees found applying for the course straightforward, from submitting their application and proof of eligibility, to the interview and receiving their offer²².

“The process was actually quite easy. It was straightforward. I did all of it by myself.” – *EYITT graduate*

In contrast, a few trainees faced issues in their application, often due to personal circumstances. This included those completing a course at the time of application or going through qualification equivalisation which took longer than expected. Qualification equivalisation is a process in which applicants who are otherwise suitable but do not have a GCSE Level 4 in a required subject, can take a test to demonstrate their ability is a similar level and breadth²³.

Motivations for taking the course

Trainees had a variety of motivations for choosing to study EYITT. The most common reasons were that they wanted to improve their early years knowledge (66%), followed by being committed to working with early years children (65%).

When asked what their main reason was for choosing to study EYITT, trainees again noted these reasons most highly. ²⁴One-quarter (24%) reported their commitment to the working with early years children as their main reason for applying, and a further 20% reported the main reason was a commitment to the sector.

Half of trainees (56%) reported that career progression and promotion was a reason for applying for EYITT, and this was the main motivation for one-in-five (20%) trainees.

²² Note that all trainees that took part in interviews successfully applied for, and undertook, EYITT.

²³ More information about course eligibility criteria and equivalisation tests can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/671636d39242eccc6c849b27/EYITT_criteria_and_supporting_guidance_Oct_2024.pdf

²⁴ Respondents were asked which of any of the options motivated them. For respondents that gave more than one answer, they were asked to select one as their main motivation.

Table 3.1 All and main reasons for applying to EYITT course

	Reasons for applying to EYITT course	Main reason for applying to EYITT course
	Percent	Percent
I wanted to improve my early years knowledge	66%	20%
I am committed to working with early years children	65%	24%
I wanted to feel more confident teaching early years	58%	16%
It is fully funded/ I didn't have to pay for it	58%	7%
I thought it would help me to get a promotion / progress in my career	56%	20%
I thought I would enjoy it	39%	2%
I thought it would help me to get a pay increase	25%	2%
I thought it would provide better job security	24%	2%
My manager recommended that I should apply	19%	2%
Other	5%	4%
Don't know	0%	<1%

Source: B3. What motivated you to apply for the Early Years Initial Teacher Training course? B4. And what was the one main reason you felt motivated to apply for the Early Years Initial Teacher Training course? Cohort 1 End of Training and Cohort 2 Baseline (324).

Increasing knowledge and confidence

In the qualitative interviews, trainees, providers and managers agreed that one of the main reasons for taking part in EYITT was to increase knowledge and confidence. This was the most common motivation in the survey, reported by 66% of trainees (and the second most common main reason for taking the course, reported by 20%). This factor was particularly true for those entering the course via the graduate entry route, from another country, or for those with less years' experience in the early years.

"The reason that I did it [the course] was to learn in more detail about teaching young children...it's definitely fulfilled the criteria that I wanted."
- *EYITT trainee*

Passion and commitment

Commitment to working with early years children motivated two-thirds (65%) of trainees to take the course. This was the most common main reason given, with a quarter (24%) of trainees reporting this. In the qualitative interviews, this was also true. Many chose to study EYITT because they loved working in their current nursery, or they loved working with young children. For example, one practitioner described the rewarding feeling when a young child has a light bulb moment and something ‘clicks’.

Promotion / moving up in career

More than half (56%) of trainees reported that promotion and career progression was one of their main reasons for taking up EYITT, and 20% reported that it was the main reason. This is reflected to some extent in the qualitative interviews, where promotion and progression were rarely the main motivation, but were seen as an additional benefit. Trainees suggested a few reasons for why they chose EYITT, relating to promotion and career progression:

- Taking the next natural step in their career.
- They were a recent university graduate working in early years (unqualified) and did not want to do a Level 3 childcare qualification as it was lower than their degree level qualification.
- Opening up their options if they were to move jobs or house, i.e. they could have EYTS on their CV which could make them a more attractive candidate for a future role.
- Unsure about their future and wanted to gain a higher qualification to generally ‘open some doors’ (either in their own setting, or somewhere else).

“The manager of the nursery class I work in, if she was to move on, I’ve got the qualification now to apply for her role potentially.” – *EYITT trainee*

Funding

The availability of funding was a key factor for EY settings. Each of the managers interviewed suggested that without the funding available for their setting, they would not have been able to release their staff for training. Each setting stated that the funding was not enough to fully cover the outgoings they incurred as a result of their staff attending the training, however they were glad there was at least some funding to partly offset the costs of finding cover.

Around six-in-ten (58%) trainees reported the fact the course was fully funded was a reason for taking EYITT. Many trainees in the interviews also reported this, as previous qualifications they had received had either cost them or their setting. Again, it appeared to be a bonus of the course, rather than a core or sole reason for taking the course (only

7% reported it was the main reason). In the qualitative interviews, multiple trainees reported the funding was a deciding factor for them taking part in EYITT.

"It was nice to do something that I didn't have to financially outlay myself, that was obviously one of the main reasons for doing it." – *EYITT trainee*

An additional factor suggested by trainees as motivation for taking the course, was that the trainees were able to study whilst still in full-time work (if they were on the graduate employment based route). This, alongside the funding, made the course possible for those that wanted to study for EYTS, but also needed to continue earning money. This was seen as a positive of EYITT compared with QTS, as it had greater flexibility.

For particular providers, online study was seen as a positive factor by a few trainees and led them to choose that provider. This was due to the flexibility online provision afforded these trainees.

Motivation for managers

Managers of EYITT trainees were motivated to release their staff to attend the EYITT course for multiple reasons. This included:

- Increasing the knowledge and confidence of the trainee, for the benefit of the member of staff and the setting in general.
- The ability to access funding which was used to cover the cost of replacement staff whilst the trainee attended the course.

Additionally, managers were motivated by having an extra member of staff or their first member of staff with this level of qualification. EYITT was very well regarded by setting managers because the qualification provided trainees with the most up to date research and evidence about working with children in the early years. This was a key motivator, as trainees were able to bring this knowledge back to the setting, apply it and share it with other members of staff. There is more detail about the impact of the course on skills, knowledge and practice in Chapter 4.

Challenges and solutions to increasing take up

In the qualitative interviews, providers, managers and EYITT trainees were asked about any barriers or challenges that could hold other practitioners back from choosing to study EYITT. Many barriers were inter-related and connected to wider sector issues relating to pay and conditions. Those who were interviewed were asked what they thought DfE could do to increase the number of trainees taking EYITT. Many of the suggestions were perceived solutions to the challenges.

Whilst both SCITT and university-based providers experienced challenges, and offered some similar solutions, it was university based providers who seemed to be facing greater challenges in increasing take up. Whilst SCITT providers were able to identify similar challenges, their marketing efforts appeared to have reached a large audience of trainees working in nurseries. Therefore, whilst experiencing the same challenges as universities, they were able to recruit a large number of trainees, because of the scale of their organisation.

Challenge: Perceived value of the qualification for career progression

The main challenge identified was the perceived lack of benefit of the qualification after graduation, specifically in terms of career progression.²⁵ This included not being able to use the qualification in a reception class, and the whether the qualification was required to progress in settings/the sector.

Teaching in reception

All trainees that completed the follow-up surveys and interviews had completed EYITT. However, a number of trainees suggested that they would have liked the EYITT course to give them access to future roles as a teacher of a reception class. Currently, gaining EYTS does not grant this²⁶. A few trainees were not aware of this fact when they began the course.

The majority of the providers interviewed in the qualitative research reported that not being able to use the qualification to teach in a reception class was a key challenge for them to increase their take-up. They suggested that working in a reception was seen to be more attractive to some potential trainees, due to the perceived higher status, pay and benefits (e.g. longer holidays, and better pension arrangements) available through working in a school. Providers were keen to ensure that potential trainees were clear that EYITT did not offer QTS. As a result, in some cases they found potential trainees were choosing to obtain QTS instead.

²⁵ As reported in Chapter 4, the course benefitted trainees in terms of improvement in early years related confidence, knowledge, skills and practice.

“We have so many inquiries. It's ridiculous. But when they realise what they can't do afterwards, i.e. get a well-paid job like a teacher, then people tend to decline it” – *EYITT provider*

A few providers pointed out that EYITT courses have the same entry requirements as PGCE or QTS courses, therefore it felt unfair to them that EYTS did not enable graduates to teach in reception, nor bring the associated benefits.

“They've got ...exactly the same entry requirements as QTS. They've gone through exactly the same rigorous and robust recruitment. The course is intense. You know they're working full time at the same time as doing it and then they come out the end. And as one said last year, they get paid more in Tesco.” – *EYITT provider*

“Even if it's funded, you know it's not it's not regarded very highly. I feel like the course needs to get more credibility.” – *EYITT graduate*

However, a few trainees specifically chose EYITT rather than doing a course that led to QTS, as they were committed to the sector and would like to remain working with early years children, and did not mind about not being able to work in a school. As supported by the survey data, career progression was often not the main reason for those that did the course (20% reported this).

Sector qualification requirements

A few graduates, providers and managers questioned how necessary the qualification was, as a Level 6 qualification is not required in a nursery setting for someone in a lead role. There was a view that this could limit the number of trainees applying for EYITT, as not having it, was not inhibiting them from moving up in their career. Some noted that having a Level 6 was useful from a ratios perspective for a setting, as Level 6 staff can have more children in their care²⁷.

“Career wise, it doesn't give me a lot more than what I already have. You know, if I wanted a manager's position, I can do that on a Level 3.” – *EYITT trainee*

A few managers and providers felt that there was no professional career development framework attached to gaining the qualification, as there is with QTS. For example, there is no early career framework (ECF), or pay scale. The ECF framework is in place for early career teachers (ECTs) to support development in the early stages of their career, by building on what was covered in initial teacher training.

²⁷ [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

Suggested solutions: Perceived value of the qualification for career progression

Increasing pay in the early years

Many trainees, managers and providers felt the qualification would attract more interest, as would the sector in general, if it led to higher pay. Currently, there is no standard pay-scale for early years staff including those that achieve EYTS. This means for those that achieve the qualification, there is no promise of increased pay, despite an increase in their level of qualification. Many providers and trainees suggested that a pay rise at the point of qualification, or a pay-scale for EYTS, could incentivise more people to take the course.

“Pay the graduates! Just actually recognise them for what they are, which are knowledgeable, outstanding practitioners by the time they come out of this programme.” – *EYITT provider*

One manager of a trainee working as the lead teacher in a reception class in an academy reported they were paying their trainee in line with a first year ECT salary, rather than their previous Level 3 salary. However, one manager in a PVI felt that they would lose good staff who take the course, as they cannot afford to pay a salary that matches that of a school based EYTS.

Allowing those with EYTS to be able to teach in reception classes

Providers reported that they often experienced a good amount of interest in the course which declined once it was made clear EYTS does not qualify a trainee to work as a teacher in a school reception class. Currently, those with EYTS status cannot lead teaching in a reception class in a maintained state school, and it is up to the discretion of headteachers in other schools (for example schools that are part of academy trusts, or independent schools) whether this can happen²⁸. There was a suggestion that that level of knowledge gained, alongside similar entry requirements to QTS courses, meant that they should be able to teach in any reception class in a school, upon gaining EYTS. One manager in an academy school allowed their EYTS qualified member of staff to be the reception teacher. They felt this was acceptable and that the member of staff was well qualified for the role. A few trainees that took part in interviews had also gone on to become reception teachers.

Professionalising the sector

Suggestions related to professionalisation were specifically related to attaching QTS to EYTS, or developing an early years specific qualification that had QTS attached. As

²⁸ Those with EYTS can teach in a reception class in a maintained (state) school, but they cannot be employed to lead the teaching. Those with EYTS are not qualified to teach classes above Reception in maintained schools. It is possible to teach as a reception teacher with EYTS in an academy, independent or free school, at the headteachers' discretion.

already reported, there was felt to be a disparity between the teaching and early years sector, and this could reduce that gap. Further to this, there were numerous suggestions related to bringing the support for gaining EYTS in line with early career teaching, via frameworks and pay-scales. This could further assist reaching parity with the teaching profession.

Making EYTS mandatory for all nursery settings

A few suggested that take-up would naturally increase if all settings were required to have a member of staff with EYTS on site. A few providers and managers felt there was strong evidence related to improved outcomes for children when there is a member of staff with EYTS on site.²⁹

Challenge: Difficulty for settings to release staff to take the course

Providers, specifically those that were based at universities, tended to aim their marketing towards leaders in PVI. A common reason as to why PVIs were not putting their staff forward to take the course, was because they were unable to find staff to cover them whilst they were at the training or on a placement and maintain the ratios. Finding a replacement often proved time consuming, for example re-arranging rotas and contracts to get part-time staff to work for longer or trying to hire someone to work in the periods when the trainee would be studying/ on placement. One manager reported they were unlikely to send another member of staff on the training in the future; due to the difficulty they faced in covering them. Providers were also meeting this issue in their recruitment, and one provider saw it impact trainees completing the course.

“I've also lost students because settings can't agree to release them because of staffing issues, even though they have the £7000 to support”
– *EYITT provider*

Trainees on the graduate employment based route were often senior and experienced. Finding cover staff of the same quality and experience as the member of staff on training could be particularly hard for managers.

“I think the difficulty of early years at the moment is with finding the right staffing. You know the students I have that have degrees in early years are the ones that are leading practice as room leaders or deputy managers or managers. So for them to then be placed on a course means ratios and everything is more difficult” - *EYITT provider*

²⁹ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons., P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project technical paper 12: The final report-effective pre-school education. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10005308/1/EPPE12Sylva2004Effective.pdf>

Some trainees worried about cover when considering whether to apply for the course. This could be a challenge for other potential trainees.

“The only thing I worried about was having the time off because ... I think it was 10% off your weekly timetable...to ensure that you put time to do your studies. When you're working in the nursery, you're obviously in ratios, so it's very hard to get out of ratios, especially in a job world where you are low on staff anyway and there's all these barriers. So I think that was my main concern. Although I'm upskilling, are they actually going to let me out for the time essentially.” – *EYITT trainee*

A SCITT-provider noted that September was not always the optimal time for settings to release staff, due to the start of a new academic year and all of the changes associated with this (e.g. training new staff, new children). Introducing a January start as well as a September start helped them to increase the number of trainees who could take part.

Suggested solutions: Difficulty for settings to release staff to take the course

Increasing employer funding

Of the five managers that took part in the research, all reported the funding was not enough to recuperate their costs. These costs can include:

- recruiting a part-time member of staff for the duration of EYITT
- hiring agency staff
- paying overtime to existing staff.

Recruitment was seen as particularly difficult for short time periods/part-time contracts, to fit the EYITT schedule of placements and study time. Managers reported reducing their requirements to find someone for cover. For example, if their trainee had a Level 5 qualification, they may eventually have to hire someone who was only qualified at Level 3 to cover them, because of the difficulty in finding someone with a higher qualification. One provider noted the employer funding had not increased for a long time and was not in line with inflation, suggesting why this was not enough to cover employer costs. Increasing the employer funding would assist settings to cover all of their costs and could incentivise other settings to release their staff to take part in EYITT.

One provider highlighted the importance of the funding for employers, even at its current level.

“And if we can make a plea, the employer incentive is really, really valued. So, I think keeping that definitely would be beneficial because if that was removed, I think it would possibly kill the routes because settings wouldn't be able to afford to release trainees to do placements”
– EYITT provider

Placements within a setting

Currently, trainees spend time on placement in settings which work with children of different ages. This is a core part of the course, and as reported, placements can create resourcing issues for settings. One manager suggested that settings with multiple age-groups could be used to provide placements for trainees that are already employed there, for at least some of their placements. The manager felt this would be less disruptive to the setting, and still give the trainee the same experience of spending time with different aged children.

Flexibility of start date

A few SCITT providers have already begun exploring starting the course outside of the standard September start. They had found this fruitful in encouraging settings to release staff during a less busy window. They also found that the September start date can clash with equivalency tests or be too late for those awaiting GCSE results to start the course.

“And actually, the flexibility that gave to settings was great, because sometimes nursery settings in particular will say to us they don't make their decisions about CPD or career opportunities for their staff until...August when they've got a clear indication of how many children are coming in for the following academic year.” – EYITT provider

Challenge: Lack of awareness of the course in the sector

The second challenge to increasing take up is the lack of broader awareness about the course in the sector. Multiple university-based and SCITT providers reported that those working in the early years sector (for example, early years local authorities teams, or nursery managers) were not aware of the qualification. This initial step of raising awareness with local authorities provided difficult, as the correct person was sometimes difficult to identify and contact.

That being said, providers promoted and marketed their courses, both to employers and potential trainees, through various means. For example:

- Email and postal campaigns to PVI and nursery-chains
- Word of mouth among local contacts in the sector
- Contacting nurseries and trainees that had taken part before

- Attending university careers fairs
- Hosting information webinars/drop ins

SCITTs found their marketing generated a large amount of interested potential trainees, however a sizeable proportion of university- based providers reported difficulty in marketing the course. In part, this was due to competing demands for university marketing teams' time / budget, given the relatively small scale of the course, compared with others in universities. This meant that many university-based providers relied on their own connections in the sector to promote the course, which had limited success.

“It's relying on spontaneous word of mouth, luck and coincidence” –
EYITT provider

EYITT providers generally considered that it would help to improve the profile of the course if DfE could do more to raise awareness of it within the sector.

This lack of awareness was demonstrated by the fact that most trainees who were interviewed were not aware of the course before it was brought to their attention by a colleague or by finding it on Google. Other courses within the sector, for example Level 3 Childcare qualifications, postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and courses with qualified teacher status (QTS), were more widely known about.

Solutions: Lack of awareness of the course in the sector

DfE to raise awareness of the course

Some providers reflected that they could be doing more to raise the awareness of their course. However, a few felt that it was beyond their own responsibility to market the qualification itself. There was a sense that awareness of the qualification in general was low, and that raising the profile and status of the qualification was beyond what a single provider could do on their own. Some providers suggested there could be a role for DfE in terms of raising the profile of EYITT through their own channels, in particular among those working in local authority early years teams.

Challenge: Course eligibility requirements

There were a number of ways that participants suggested course eligibility requirements were a challenge to increasing take up of the course.

The requirement for a Grade 4 or above in GCSE Science³⁰

The requirement for a Grade 4 or above in GCSE Science was reported by multiple providers, trainees and managers as a challenge for increasing course participation. Providers reported potential trainees being unable to apply for the course because of this

³⁰ [Early years initial teacher training \(EYITT\): criteria and supporting advice - GOV.UK](#)

entry criteria. A few providers mentioned that gaining GCSE Science whilst in full time work could be time consuming and difficult and was not always seen as 'worth it'.

A few SCITT and university-based providers questioned the extent to which a Grade 4 in GCSE Science was required for EYTS. Whilst this is also an entry requirement for QTS, one provider suggested the curriculum was not as advanced in the early years and did not feel necessary.

"I get constant emails and calls from nursery managers, from headteachers saying I've got a really good practitioner, who'd make an excellent teacher. They've not got the GCSE Science we can't offer you a place until you've got your GCSE Science." – *EYITT provider*

"The eligibility is difficult. We speak to a lot of people, and it's unfortunate when you have to say, well, we need the GCSEs and I must say, hand on heart, I don't think I've used that Science GCSE once since training to be a teacher." – *EYITT provider*

One of the larger SCITT providers felt that eligibility in relation to GCSEs, was a huge challenge to increasing take up. There were a few mentions of the requirement to have a Grade 4 or above in GCSE English and maths. One provider shared that they were aware of potential trainees who had relevant graduate level qualifications to be able to do the EYITT course, but did not have Grade 4 in GCSE English and maths.

Conversely, one provider liked that the entry requirements related to science were the same as QTS, as it highlighted that teachers in primary schools were the same as early years teachers in terms of status.

DfE policy articulates that all EYITT trainees must have a Grade 4 or above in GCSE English, Maths and Science, in line with requirements for ITT courses, and compliance with this requirement is mandated via conditions attached to EYITT funding. This eligibility requirement is to ensure qualified early years teachers (EYTS) have the academic rigour to engage with degree level study and ability to ensure high quality teaching and care in their setting.

Equivalency test requirements related to older, or non-UK obtained, qualifications

For those that trained outside of the UK, or completed their degree before GCSEs existed, equivalence tests need to be undertaken. In a few cases, these were difficult or costly to obtain. However, there was some anecdotal feedback that these were becoming easier to obtain in recent years, particularly after COVID-19, due to more services being available to do this throughout the world.

The number of Level 5 graduates in the sector

Another entry requirement of EYITT is holding a degree from a UK higher education institution or equivalent qualification. A few providers shared the sentiment that there was a limited number of graduates working in the early years sector. In Chapter 5, this hypothesis is further explored. A few noted that many working in the sector could have a Level 5 qualification, and a high level of experience, but not a degree, and are therefore not eligible.

The scale of 'pipeline' courses

Related to the requirement for a degree to enter the course, was the worry from a few providers around the future pipeline of graduates in related fields who would be interested in EYITT. They reported that undergraduate courses related to childcare or early years, to which they traditionally marketed EYITT, were declining in size, or being cut altogether. This could lead to a further decline in graduate entry trainees.

Solutions: Course eligibility requirements

There was limited suggestion from those that took part in the research as to how the challenge of entry requirements for the course could be resolved, to increase take-up. There was minimal suggestion of reducing the courses entry requirements. A few providers and managers queried the necessity for GCSE Grade 4 in Science for those working the early years, but others felt that it was key for the course to be comparable to QTS courses in terms of its entry requirements.

Other challenges

There were some additional challenges highlighted by a handful of trainees, providers and managers. Those that took part in the research did not offer specific solutions to these challenges.

- A few trainees mentioned that there was a scarcity of local options to study EYITT, so they had to travel quite far each week for their studies and placement. This did not put them off from applying for the course, but they thought the travel could deter others.
- A few providers and managers gave examples of trainees who dropped out during the course, as they were not able to juggle the course, work and home life.
- A few providers noted that there are challenges in place for those working as a childminder. This is because they are unable to access the employer incentive as a sole trader, alongside the difficulty of finding time to complete the course and go on placements, if they are the only member of staff in the setting.

Experience of the course – skills, knowledge, confidence and practice

Key findings

- EYITT trainees, managers of EYITT trainees and EYITT providers were positive about the course.
- Most trainees started EYITT with a lot of experience in the sector, and therefore already had relatively high levels of skills, knowledge and confidence. The extent to which trainees 'strongly agreed' with statements related to their own skills, knowledge and confidence, increased between the pre- and post-training surveys.
- Trainees reported using many of the skills they learnt on the course at their setting and often shared what they learnt on the course with other staff in their setting.
- Trainees and managers reported positive impacts on children within settings which employed early years teachers. This included a reported improvement in the personal, social and emotional development of children and examples of changes in practice based on knowledge from the EYITT course.

Overall course experience

Nearly all EYITT trainees, managers of EYITT trainees and EYITT providers were positive about the course. Trainees reported that completing EYITT had improved their confidence, knowledge and skills. As a result, trainees practice had improved, and many had introduced changes into their setting. Many trainees would recommend or have recommended the course to other practitioners. Trainees gave very positive feedback about their experience of the course.

"I was very satisfied. It was very professional, interesting, well presented, and there was lots of information. I learned a lot so that was great, and I enjoyed meeting lots of other people as well" – *EYITT trainee*

"I think it's has helped me feel pride in being an early year's teacher...I can call myself a teacher and that makes a big difference." – *EYITT trainee*

Most trainees were satisfied with the support they received from their provider during the course. A few trainees experienced issues with getting enough support from within the setting, because of high workloads. One provider mentioned that for this reason, some trainees find it difficult to find a mentor from within their setting.

“That is sometimes a pinch point for settings, and they just can't release that member of staff to mentor effectively as much as they would want to” – *EYITT provider*

Whilst trainees were generally very positive about the course, the most common negative factor was many trainees found it difficult to balance the workload of the course, whilst managing the demands of their job. For some, they also needed to balance family or caring responsibilities in addition to this.

Valuable elements of the course

In the Cohort 1 end of training survey, trainees reported that practical work/employment or placement was the element of the course that had the greatest impact on their practice (77%) followed by classroom learning (60%) and independent study (37%) (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Elements of course that had the greatest impacts on trainees' practice

	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)
Practical work / employment or placements	126	77%
Classroom learning	98	60%
Independent study	60	37%
Support from colleagues/peers	48	29%
Shadowing staff	22	14%
Training from staff	22	14%
Support from training provider (<i>unprompted</i>)	3	2%
Networking with staff from other settings (<i>unprompted</i>)	2	2%
Something else	2	1%
Don't know	1	1%

Source: C3 Which elements of your Early Years Initial Teacher Training course have had the greatest impact on your practice? Cohort 1 End of training (163)

Trainees in the qualitative interviews felt the placements were particularly useful, as it gave them an insight into the different practice of different setting types, which they may not have experienced before. Placements were also seen as an opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge that they had been learning on the course.

“What I found really useful is 2 weeks I spent in the reception class. That was really, really valuable. Really interesting to see using phonics and maths in a classroom situation compared to a nursery situation” – *EYITT trainee*

Trainees also found that meeting practitioners from other settings was useful. Many trainees mentioned in interviews that it was encouraging to meet with other early years professionals who were also passionate about the sector.³¹

“One of the most valuable things was being able to talk to other practitioners...from across the country and a variety of settings, which you never really get to do otherwise...so it was really valuable to share ideas and share experience” – *EYITT trainee*

Perceived impacts on skills, knowledge, confidence and practice

The data in this section of the report mostly focuses on the comparisons of the Cohort 2 survey responses. This is because - as discussed in Chapter 1 - in Cohort 1, the first survey took place once training was complete, as opposed to at the start, and the follow up survey took place around three months later. As a result, there were limited changes to trainees' confidence, skills and knowledge between the two surveys, and the first survey is not a true baseline because it was conducted towards the end of the course. In comparison, the first Cohort 2 survey was carried out before the course started, which means the results of the Cohort 2 surveys are more appropriate for understanding how trainees' skills, knowledge and confidence changed from before starting the course, to after completing it.

Trainees' confidence

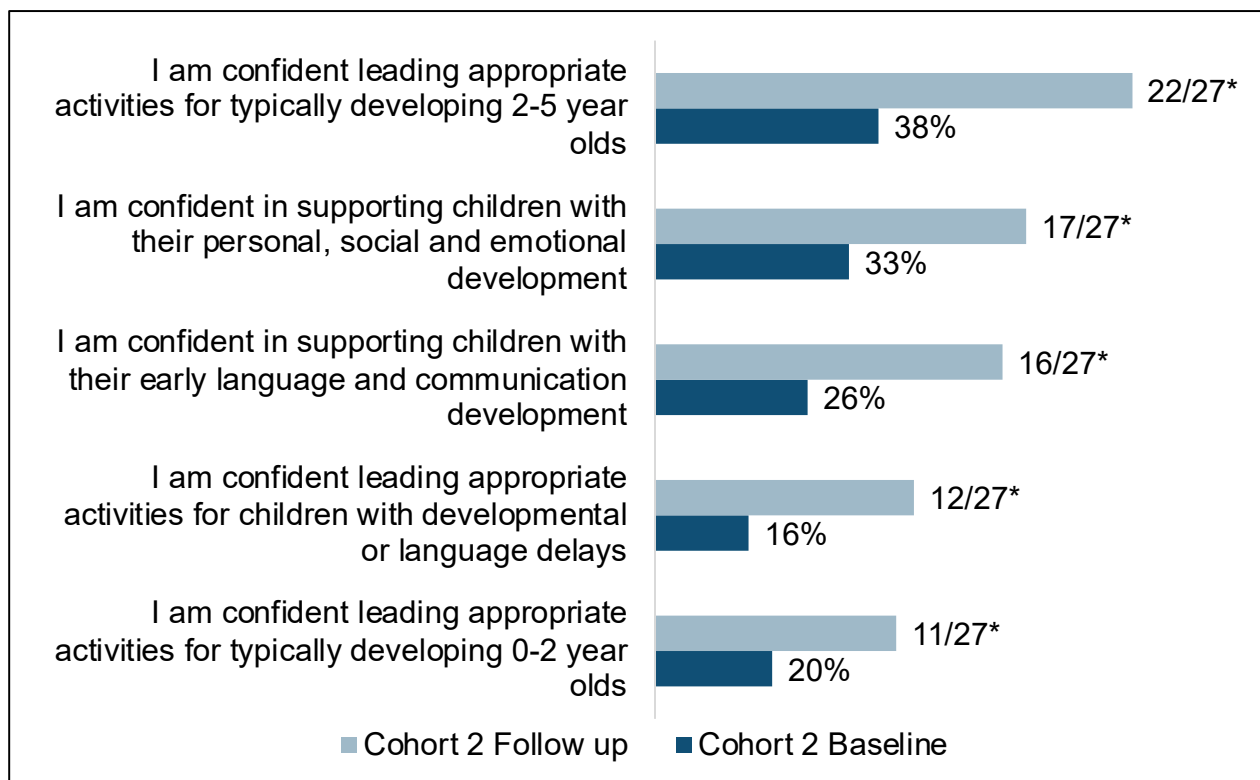
EYITT trainees, managers of those that took the course, and EYITT providers, all reported that the course helped develop trainee confidence. Whilst most EYITT trainees had prior experience working in the early years sector (as shown in Table 2.2), many reported greater confidence in their own abilities as a result of doing the course.

In the surveys, trainees were asked to rate their confidence based on a series of statements relating to their knowledge and skills, both before and after the training (as shown in Figure 4-1). The proportion of trainees that 'strongly agreed' with the confidence statements increased, between the upper- and post-course surveys. This suggests the course had a positive impact on trainee confidence. For example, 38% of trainees strongly agreed before the course that they were confident in leading appropriate

³¹ Networking with staff from other settings was an unprompted response in the Cohort 1 end of training survey.

activities for typically developing 0–2-year-olds. This rose to 22 out of 27 trainees in Cohort 2 follow up survey. Figure 4-1 charts levels of ‘strongly agree’ with statements for Cohort 2 trainees before and after the course.

Figure 4-1 Extent to which trainees ‘strongly agree’ with confidence statements



Source: C2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Baseline (161), B6 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Follow up (27).

* indicates a statistically significant difference between the Baseline and Follow up survey results.

Looking at overall confidence (combining those who either agreed or strongly agreed with statements), trainees reported high levels of confidence at the start of the course for some topics, and moderately high levels of confidence for others.

- 92% were confident in supporting children with their personal, social and emotional development,
- 90% were confident leading appropriate activities for typically developing 2–5-year-olds,
- 90% were confident in supporting children with their early language and communication development,
- 69% were confident in leading appropriate activities for typically developing 0-2 year olds,
- 69% were confident in leading appropriate activities for children with developmental or language delays.

In the Cohort 2 follow up survey, trainees reported similar levels of overall confidence. In terms of confidence in leading appropriate activities for children with developmental or language delays, 24 out of 27 either strongly agreed or agreed: a significant increase from 69% in the baseline survey. The proportion who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the other statements also increased between the baseline and the follow-up survey after they completed the course, but none of these increases were significant. This can partially be explained by the fact that overall confidence at baseline was already high, and partly by the small base size at the follow-up survey.

Focusing solely on the 27 trainees that completed both the Cohort 2 baseline and follow-up surveys, there was increased confidence in leading appropriate activities for typically developing 0-2 year olds, with those who agreed or strongly agreed increasing from 14 out of 27 before the course to 23 out of 27 after the course³². There was also a significant increase in trainees' confidence in leading appropriate activities for children with developmental or language delays, with the number of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed rising from 16 out of 27 to 24 out of 27. For the other statements, although there was an increase, this was not large enough to be significant.

Findings were similar for Cohort 1, however as per the caveat at the start of the chapter, Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 report on different periods of time. The element in which Cohort 1 trainees were the most confident in at the end of training survey, was their ability to support children with their personal, social and emotional development (99%). In the follow up survey, nearly all surveyed trainees continued to feel confident in this skill (27 out of 28). In the Cohort 1 follow up survey, trainees were the least confident in leading appropriate activities for children with developmental or language delays (22 out of 28 agreed or strongly agreed).

During the qualitative interviews, trainees talked about ways in which the course had improved their confidence.

“The course helped me to gain confidence in what I was doing already, but back it up with research and up to date thinking and reflect on my own practice and make improvements. – *EYITT trainee*

Many trainees reported having greater confidence in their own ideas, which made them more comfortable advocating for change in their setting. Some felt this was because they knew that their ideas and suggestions were grounded in research.

“It gave me the confidence to speak up more and just say actually what you're doing isn't right, it's outdated and it isn't supported by evidence.” – *EYITT trainee*

³² Note, the number who were asked the confidence metrics in the Cohort 2 Follow up survey were those currently working in an EY setting (n=27).

For some trainees, the course filled knowledge gaps they were previously less confident in and gave them opportunity to further develop their practice on placement. Those on graduate entry EYITT, or with less work-based experience in the UK, also self-reported an increase in confidence, because of this factor.

Managers of trainees noticed an increase in their staff's confidence both during, and after, the course, which they attributed to them doing the course. Providers also observed a change in confidence of trainees across the duration of the course.

Trainees' knowledge

Almost all trainees reported an increase in their knowledge as a result of completing the course. Most trainees had a good base-level of early years knowledge when entering the course, as might be expected given that six-in-ten (59%) had at least three years' experience in the sector (and 94% had at least some experience in the sector). Trainees reported the course helped to reinforce what they already knew and fill in any gaps in their existing knowledge. Many trainees and managers felt that learning up to date early years delivery methods was a particularly valuable element of the course.

"I only did [the course] last year and some colleagues were trained a long time ago. Quite often, I've been asked what the up-to-date opinion is on this...what is the current thinking on it... even by teachers that trained 20 years ago...because things have changed so much in teaching young children in that time...it's nice to have your opinion valued." – *EYITT trainee*

Some trainees gave examples of how learning about up-to-date teaching methods had led them to change their lessons, through introducing more child-led learning, or learning through play.

"We now plan to each individual child. We've done a lot of work around what that looks like and breaking our curriculum down into small steps, which probably wouldn't have come about if I hadn't been on the course."
– *EYITT trainee*

Other useful areas of knowledge that trainees reported an increase in included:

- Knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and learning about early years theories/theorists. When asked if they have good knowledge of early learning and EYFS, the proportion of trainees who strongly agreed increased from 28% before the course, compared with 24 out of 30 who strongly agreed in the follow up (covered in more depth when looking at trainee's skills and practice later in this chapter).

- Expanding knowledge of a wider age range. This is reflected in the survey data where there was a significant increase in confidence for leading activities for typically developing 0–2-year-olds when comparing those who completed both the before course and follow up surveys. The number of trainees who strongly agreed with the statement increased from 20%, to 11 out of 27. When considering confidence with 2–5-year-olds, this increased from 38% to 22 out of 27.

“I’m confident in what I’m saying and what I’m delivering now, and it has filled gaps in the knowledge I had of different age groups.” – *EYITT trainee*

- Child wellbeing and pastoral care.

‘From the course I’ve understood a lot more that if children aren’t [emotionally] regulated, you’re not going to be able to teach them maths or literacy or anything because they’re just not ready. So, a lot of what I’ve learnt, I’ve applied through the way I care and support the children to regulate.’ – *EYITT trainee*

Child development

In the surveys, trainees were asked specifically about their understanding of babies’ and children’s development, both before and after the course. The extent to which Cohort 2 trainees strongly agreed that they had a clear understanding of how to support children’s development, or good understanding of how babies and children learn and develop, increased between the before course survey and the follow up survey.

Before the course, one-quarter (25%) of trainees ‘strongly agreed’ they had a clear understanding of appropriate strategies to support children’s early language and communication development. One-in-five (22%) trainees strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of how babies and children learn and develop. As shown in Figure 4-2, when asked this question in the follow up survey:

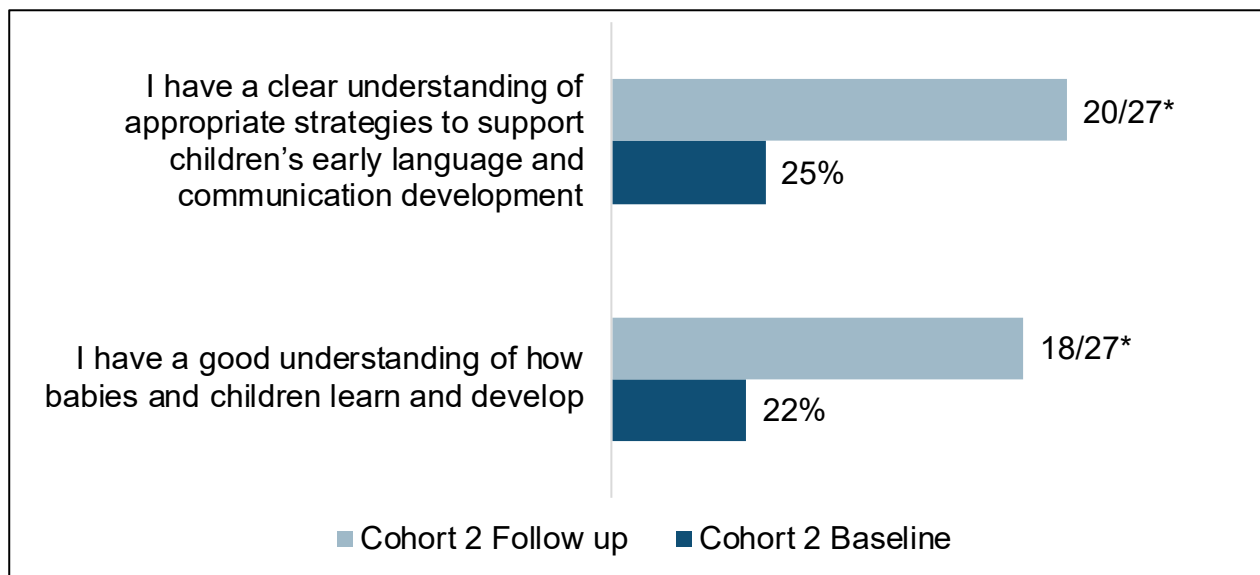
- 20 out of 27 strongly agreed they had a clear understanding of appropriate strategies to support children’s early language and communication development.
- 18 out of 27 trainees strongly they had a good understanding of how babies and children learn and develop.

This increase was statistically significant for both statements.

Between the Cohort 2 before course survey and follow up survey, there was also an increase in overall agreement (those who agreed and those who strongly agreed with the statement). In the before course survey, 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they have a clear understanding of appropriate strategies to support children’s early language and communication development. In the follow up survey this was 27 out of 27, a statistically

significant increase. Before the course, 80% of trainees either agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of how babies and children learn and develop. After the course, this increased to 26 out of 27.

Figure 4-2 Extent to which trainees ‘strongly agree’ with child development statements



Source: C3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Baseline (161), B7 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Follow up (27).

* indicates a statistically significant difference between the Baseline and Follow up survey results.

When comparing only trainees who completed both Cohort 2 surveys (before training and after training), the differences were not significant, as trainees in this group reported very high levels of knowledge before starting the course.

These findings are similar to Cohort 1. Respondents showed very high levels of agreement with these statements in the end of training survey, each with 98% agreeing. In the follow up survey 3 months later, 27/28 trainees agreed with each statement.

Trainees, managers and providers shared the value of learning about child development on the course in the qualitative interviews. One manager overseeing a reception class mentioned how useful it was to have an EYITT graduate with an in-depth understanding of child development from birth to 5, as many other practitioners in the school had more limited knowledge of the youngest age groups.

Trainees and managers found that learning about children's early language and communication development had a positive impact on trainee practice. One manager mentioned the value of having an EYITT trainee in their setting who is aware of the most up to date research related to children's language and development. The manager felt

this was particularly useful because research in early years is constantly evolving, and an EYITT trainee can share new thinking within the setting, which benefits staff and children alike.

Trainees also found that the course helped them to support children with their language and communication development. One trainee described how the course had taught them to have conversations with children in a way that engages them and improves their communication. Another trainee talked about how the knowledge she gained about communicating with babies led the setting to restructure the baby room.

“When we had that particular lesson [on understanding babies], it opened my eyes to see the importance of communication. I went back to the room, had a meeting and we restructured the baby room setting and the impact was amazing. We could see it in the babies...just the communication and the way the room was structured and the activities that we put in place...it had a big impact.” – *EYITT trainee*

Sharing skills and knowledge with other staff members

Many trainees shared what they learnt on the course with other staff in their setting. Some had done so formally through training sessions, by using what they had learnt on the course as a training guide for their staff. One trainee delivered bitesize training even whilst doing the course. For example, the trainee planned a 20-minute meeting on co-regulation and self-regulation in children, which has helped other staff members in the setting. One manager reported that their recent EYITT graduate is now supporting staff who are preparing for their Level 3 qualification.

Other trainees shared knowledge informally in day-to-day practice. One manager mentioned how valuable it is to have another person in the setting with a high level of early years knowledge, who can model best practice to other staff. This manager stated that not all staff want to study academically, so having an EYITT trainee who can share key messages from the course helps other staff members reflect on their own practice.

“I oversee all rooms and all ages of children, so I'm able to reflect on not only my practice but reflect with other practitioners on their practice as well.” - *EYITT trainee*

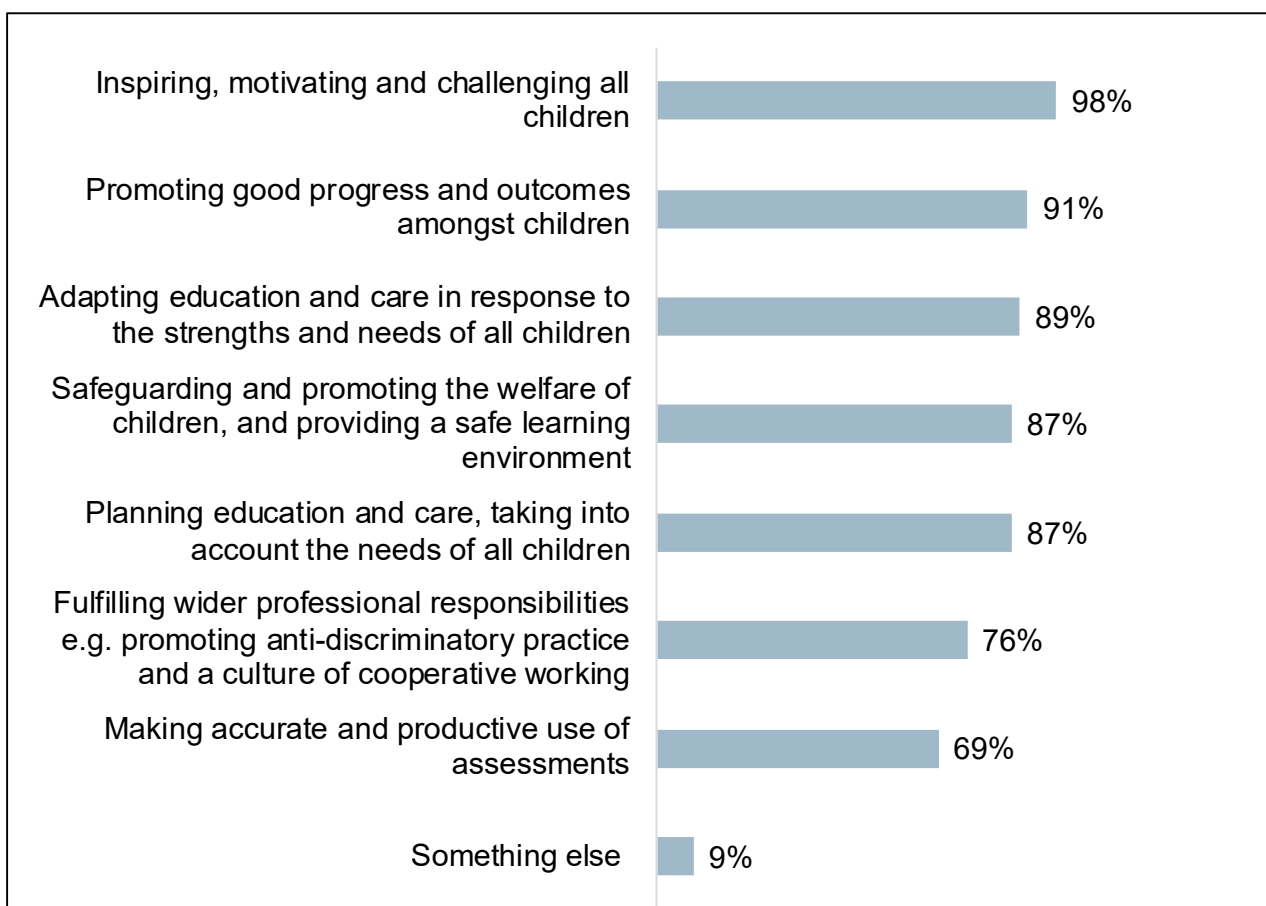
Trainees' skills and practice

Applying new skills and knowledge in their setting

Almost all trainees (96%) agreed they had applied the skills and knowledge they learnt on the EYITT course to their current role both follow up surveys.³³ Almost seven-in-ten (69%) strongly agreed.

In the follow up surveys, trainees were asked which aspects of the skills and knowledge learnt on their course they had applied to their role. Almost all trainees reported inspiring, motivating and challenging all children (98%), followed by 91% who reported promoting good progress and outcomes among children. As shown in Figure 4.3, the majority of trainees reported they had been able to apply each aspect of the skills and knowledge they gained, after the end of the course. The statement that was applicable to the lowest proportion of trainees was making accurate and productive use of assessments (69%).

Figure 4-3 Skills and knowledge that trainees have applied to their role



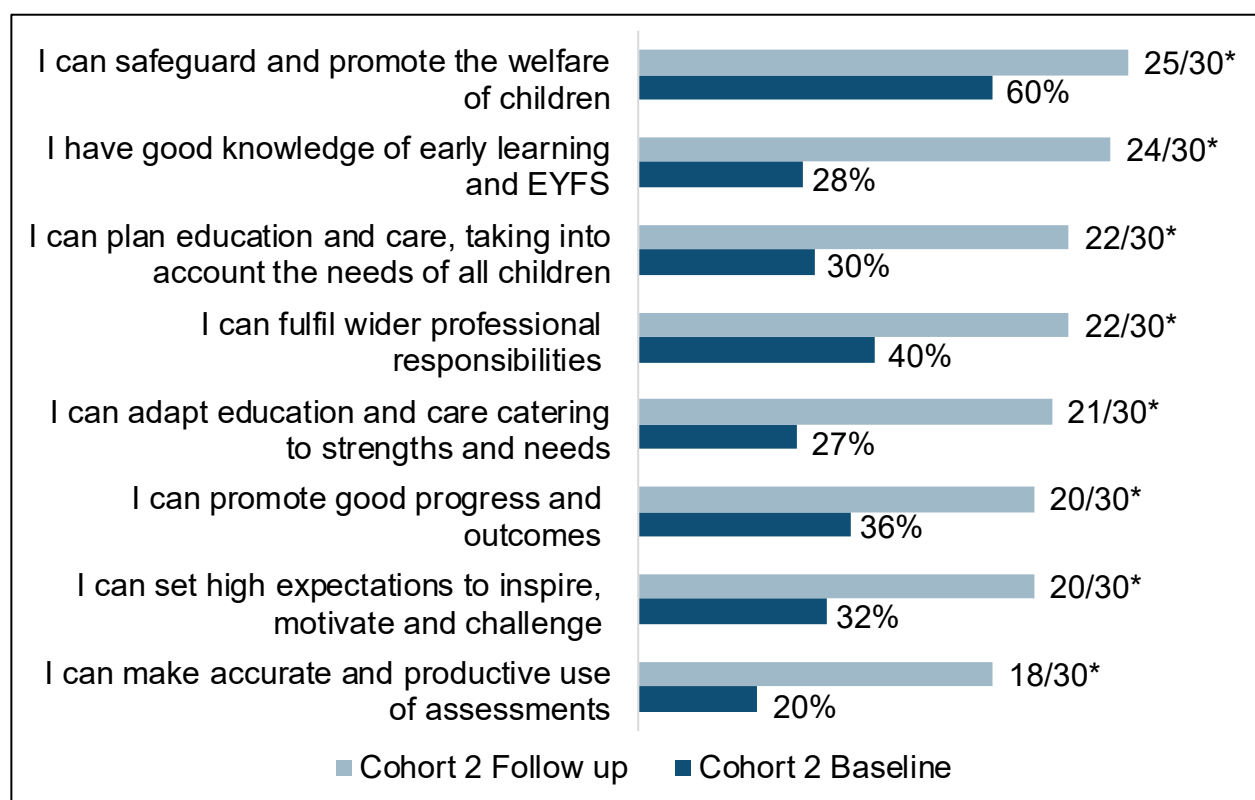
Source: B3 Thinking about the skills and knowledge you learnt whilst completing the Early Years Initial Teacher Training course, which of the following have you applied to your role? B4 And now thinking about

³³ This is based on merged data from Cohort 1 and 2 trainees in the follow up survey. This question was only asked in the follow up survey, so the improvements are self-reported by trainees.

the skills and knowledge you learnt whilst completing the Early Years Initial Teacher Training course, which of the following have you applied to your role? Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 Follow up (55).

Trainees were also asked to what extent they agreed with statements relating to their practice in their setting, in both Cohort 2 surveys (Figure 4-4). The percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with the statements significantly increased for every metric. As shown in Figure 4-4, trainees were most likely to strongly agree that they can safeguard and promote the welfare of children (60% in the initial survey and 25 out of 30 in the follow up). The most significant increase was in trainees' knowledge of early learning and EYFS, with 28% of trainees strongly agreeing before the course, compared with 24 out of 30 who strongly agreed in the follow up.

Figure 4-4 Extent to which trainees 'strongly agree' with skills and knowledge statements



Source: C1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Baseline (161), B3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Cohort 2 Follow up (30).

* Indicates a statistically significant difference between the Baseline and Follow up survey results.

There were also some significant increases in overall agreement (those who agreed and strongly agreed) between the responses in the initial and follow-up surveys for Cohort 2 trainees:

- 81% agreed that they have good knowledge of early learning and EYFS in before the course, compared with 30 out of 30 afterwards,

- 81% agreed they can make accurate and productive use of assessments before the course, compared with 30 out of 30 afterwards,
- 85% agreed that they can plan education and care, taking into account the needs of all children before the course, compared with 30 out of 30 afterwards,
- 88% agreed that they can adapt education and care in response to the strengths and needs of all children before the course, compared with 30 out of 30 afterwards,

In other areas, this increase was not significant, as trainees tended to report high levels of overall agreement at the beginning of the course. For example, 92% agreed that they can set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children in the initial survey, compared with 30 out of 30 in the follow up survey. Similarly:

- 94% agreed that they could promote good progress and outcomes among children in initial survey compared with 30 out of 30 in follow up survey,
- 93% agreed that they can fulfil wider professional responsibilities e.g. promoting anti-discriminatory practice and a culture of cooperative working in initial survey, compared to 30 out of 30 in the follow up survey.

Nearly all (99%) agreed that they can safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide a safe learning environment in the initial survey, compared with 29 out of 30 in the follow up survey.

When comparing only trainees who completed both Cohort 2 surveys, agreement increased for every aspect of practice. However, none of these increases were significant, as this group reported a very high level of overall agreement before starting the course.

Focussing on all trainees in Cohort 1, findings were similar to Cohort 2, in that a high proportion of trainees agreed with the statements about skills and knowledge at the end of training survey. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children had the highest level of 'strongly agree' responses in the initial survey (73%). Making accurate and productive use of assessments was the statement with the lowest level of respondents who strongly agreed (54%) this was also the same as Cohort 2.

In the qualitative interviews, trainees shared numerous ways which they had used their skills and knowledge from the course in their setting (either during or after the course). Many trainees mentioned how completing the course has encouraged them to reflect on their practice and think about how activities are impacting the children.

'It very much makes me look at the impact of everything all the time and think about if we've got a purpose to something. Sometimes people just put an activity out because it looks nice...but if we've not got any learning in that, what's the point in putting it out? It has made me reflect on what our provision looks like.' – *EYITT trainee*

Trainees and managers reported the course improved their management skills, and ability to work alongside other staff.

“What she did with her training allowed her to work with the wider professionals as well as supporting the staff. It gave her management confidence, that leadership confidence to do that.” – *Setting manager*

After completing the course, many EYITT graduates were given more leadership responsibilities. One manager chose a former EYITT trainee from their setting to help set up a new nursery. The trainee helped to build and train the new team, and the manager chose this trainee because of the knowledge and skills they had learnt on the EYITT course. Another EYITT graduate in the setting is now an assistant manager, who takes the lead on doing supervisions with staff and supporting training. Changes in graduate responsibilities will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Perceived impact on the children in the setting

Trainees were asked in both follow up surveys how the knowledge and skills gained in the EYITT course had impacted the children at their setting. Almost nine-in-ten (86%) trainees reported that the personal, social and emotional development of children at their setting had improved as a result of what they had learned on the course, with 26% reporting that this had improved to a great extent. A similar number (87%) of trainees reported that the communication and verbal development of children at their setting had improved, with 11% reporting a great improvement.³⁴

Trainees and managers gave specific examples of how the course had impacted the children in their setting. One manager mentioned how their EYITT trainee had positively impacted the outcomes of one disadvantaged two-year-old in the setting. The trainee was concerned about the child's behaviour due to a lot of issues going on in the child's home life, and the trainee was able to support the child as well as the parents. The trainee advocated for this child in the setting, ensuring sensitively that staff were aware this child was not just misbehaving, but were having a challenging time. The child is now in pre-school and having no behavioural issues.

Another manager stated that their setting had a higher proportion of children with a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) this year³⁵, which the headteacher saw as a direct result of having an additional highly qualified member of staff in the room. This was because the EYITT trainee was able to lead the class and deliver high quality interventions, which allowed other leaders to spend time on other tasks.

³⁴ This question was only asked in the follow up surveys, so improvements are self-reported by trainees.

³⁵ Good Level of Development (GLD) is a summative assessment judgement which is made for each child at the end of the reception year.

Identifying children who require additional support

There was also evidence that the course helped many trainees in their practice when working with children with SEND. In the Cohort 2 before training survey, one-third (36%) of trainees said they strongly agreed that they can recognise when a child requires additional support, which increased to 18 out of 26 in the follow-up survey.

Overall agreement (those who agreed and strongly agreed) of being able to recognise children who require additional support did not see a significant increase between the two surveys. Trainees reported a high level of agreement in the before training survey (91%), with this increasing to 26 out of 26 in the follow up survey.

These findings were similar to the Cohort 1 surveys. In both the end of training and follow up surveys, respondents reported a very high level of agreement (agreeing or strongly agreeing) for recognising when a child requires additional support (98% in the initial survey and 28 out of 28 in follow up survey).

Working with SEND children

A few trainees gave examples of their own improved practice regarding working with SEND children. One trainee has started working with the room lead to deliver weekly coaching with other staff in their setting, which includes training on how to work with SEND children. The trainee felt there is evidence that SEND children are now more settled in the toddler room in this setting:

“It’s just given me the confidence that I know what I’m doing, and I can coach staff and lead them. So that ultimately is having an impact on them; we’re talking about children with SEND and how we’re supporting them and I’m coaching the staff member around that.” – *EYITT trainee*

One manager reported that the EYITT trainee in their setting was the keyperson for 2–3-year-olds with emotional regulation and behavioural issues. The manager said that knowledge and skills the trainee developed in the course had helped them work successfully with these children and remarked on how impactful it had been having this trainee in the setting.

EYITT and the wider workforce

Key findings

- The majority of trainees reported that the course helped their career development. The most common change as a result of completing the course was an increase in responsibilities.
- When asked about plans for the next 12 months, nearly half planned to stay in the same role or setting and one-third planned to undertake additional early years qualifications.
- The course had limited impact on how people felt about the sector. EYITT trainees were usually highly committed already, and there were both high levels of satisfaction and some frustrations with working in early years, both before and after the course.

Qualification levels of EY setting staff

As part of this research, data from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP)³⁶ was examined. This survey is commissioned every year by DfE and includes insights into childcare and early years provision and the challenges that providers face. The SCEYP also covers the type of qualifications held by staff that work across settings. This survey covers group-based providers (GBPs), school-based providers (SBPs) and childminders across England³⁷. The SCEYP also collects data on the types of Level 6 early years qualifications held by staff in SBPs and GBPs. In this report, where we report on Level 6 qualifications held, we mean those that hold an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 6 or higher.

One element which was examined was the qualification levels of staff at different provider types. In 2023, the highest qualification level held by most staff within childminder and GBP settings was Level 3 (60% and 59% respectively). The highest level of qualification held by staff in SBPs was both Level 3 and 6 (both 38%). There was also a lower incidence of staff having no UK EY qualification at SBPs (5%, compared with childminder, 12% and GBPs, 11%). These findings are in line with qualification requirements.³⁸

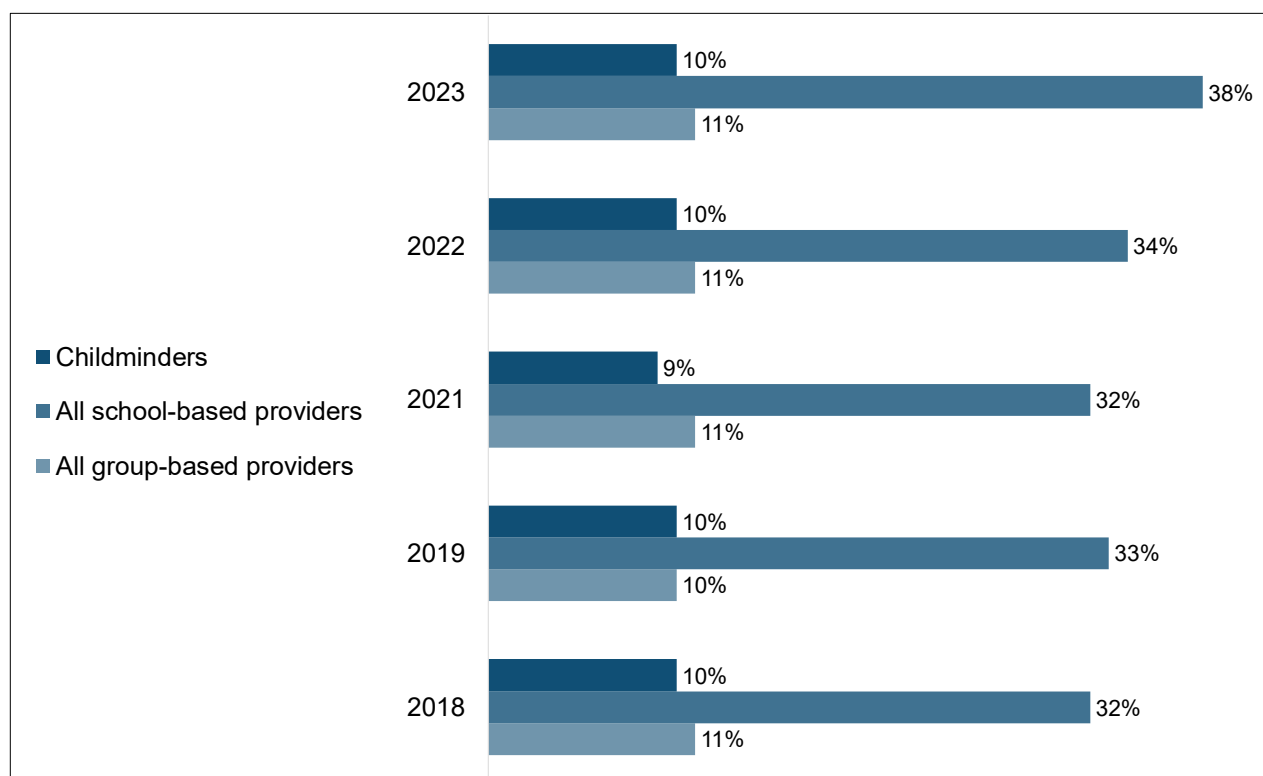
³⁶ For more information on this survey, as well as the methodology used, please visit [Childcare and early years provider survey, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

³⁷ It is important to note, that this survey does not reach all early year's settings across England.

³⁸ Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (a Level 6 qualification) is needed in order for a staff member to lead classes at SBPs where funding and oversight is provided through the local authority.

Over the years, the number of Level 6 qualifications among staff at childminders and GBP settings has remained steady, whilst there has been a small increase in SBP settings who have staff who have a Level 6 qualification (Figure 5-1).

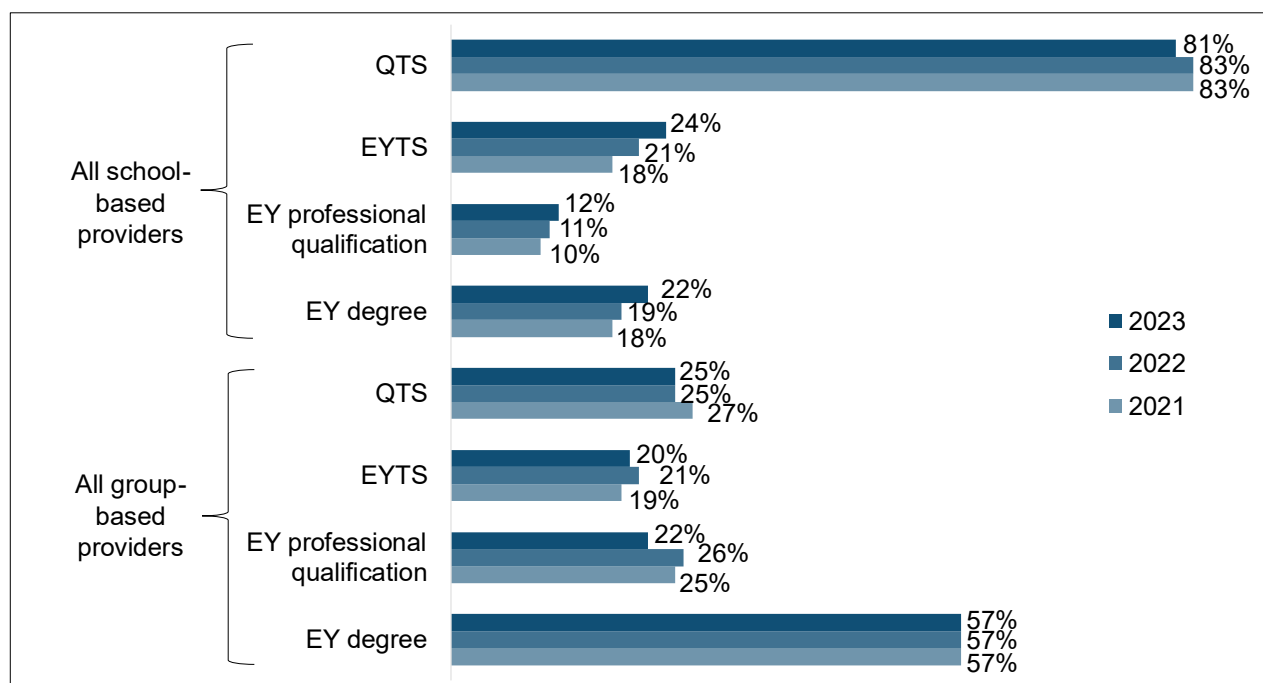
Figure 5-1. Number of Level 6 qualifications in different setting types from 2018 until 2023



Source: Childcare and Early Years Provider survey, 2023.

The type of Level 6 qualifications held by staff in SBPs and GBPs is presented in Figure 5-2. Most staff with a Level 6 qualification at SBPs had QTS (83% in both 2021 and 2022, and 81% in 2023) as a substantial number of these staff will be reception class teachers. Additionally, there was an uptick in those with a Level 6 qualification that have EYTS at SBPs (18% in 2021, 21% in 2022 and 24% in 2023). Broadly, the remainder of the data indicates that the Level 6 qualification type across settings remained largely consistent between 2021 and 2023.

Figure 5-2 Type of qualification held by staff with a Level 6 qualification at SBPs and GBPs, 2021-2023



Source: Childcare and Early Years Provider survey, 2021-2023. Please note, staff members could have more than one type of Level 6 qualification and as a result the sum across qualification types may exceed 100%.

Trainee destinations and progression

Among both cohorts of trainees, the types of setting where trainees were working were largely unchanged upon completion of the EYITT course. There were high levels of Early Years employment both before and after completing the course. Around nine in ten reported that they worked in EY settings at both time points (92% before and 90% after). This is likely due to the fact that the graduate employment based route is the most common.

Equally, on completing their training, six-in-ten (60%) working in the Early Years experienced some kind of difference in their employment, whether this was a different setting, or role. Three quarters (76%) were in the same setting as before training, 22% were in a different setting. Around half (49%) of trainees were in different roles³⁹.

Data was collected about the type of setting a trainee was working in at the start of the training, and then again after the training. Of the 23 trainees who took part in both Cohort 2 surveys and worked in the Early Years sector at both time points, it was most common for trainees to work in a Private, voluntary or independent nursery (PVI). This accounted for 10 trainees in the before training survey, and 10 trainees in the after training survey.

³⁹ Please note, it does not specify whether a new role is more senior or at the same level.

Eight of these trainees were the same, and two joined from other setting types (as shown in Table 5.1). All eight of these trainees worked in the same PVI before and after training, six in the same role, two in a different role.

The second most common type of setting that trainees worked in before and after the training was nursery provision in schools, which includes maintained nursery schools. Six trainees worked in a nursery provision before the course, seven afterwards. There were a few instances of those working in nursery settings before the training, moving to PVI settings after the training, and vice versa.

Table 5.1 Where Cohort 2 trainees worked before and after the course

	Cohort 2 baseline	Cohort 2 follow up
	Number	Number
Private, voluntary or independent nursery (operating in non-domestic premises)	10/23	10/23
Nursery provision in schools (including maintained nursery schools)	6/23	7/23
Reception year in primary school	4/23	5/23
Other type of early years setting	3/23	1/23

Source: A4 Which of the following best describes the type of early years setting you currently work in? Cohort 2 Baseline (23) and Cohort 2 Follow up (23) currently working in the Early Years, and completed both baseline and follow up surveys

The majority of trainees in both the Cohort 1 and 2 follow-up surveys reported that their EYITT course helped their career development (85%). During the qualitative interviews, trainee's thoughts on this were mixed. Whilst some acknowledged that the course had a positive impact on their skills, other felt that they would be able to progress their career whilst having a Level 3 qualification.

“Career wise, it doesn't give me a lot more than what I already have. You know, if I wanted a manager's position, I could do that on a Level 3”. –
EYITT trainee

On the other hand, the EYITT manager interviews suggested that trainees do progress in their career after the course, as they reported trainees who had been promoted.

Most trainees reported that they experienced at least one type of change as a result of completing their course. The most common outcome of the course was an increase in responsibilities (41%), followed by improved job satisfaction (37%), an increase in pay (37%) and having received a promotion (30%). Just under a third (30%) did not notice any changes or benefits as a direct result of complete the course.

In the qualitative interviews, there was some evidence of these improvements, as reported in Chapter 4. A few trainees mentioned an increase in seniority and responsibility as a result of the course, for example, becoming a room leader, leading on training or receiving a promotion. There were also cases where trainees noted that people now came to them for advice and guidance.

Some trainees did not report any employment improvements as a result of the course (beyond increased skills and knowledge) in the interviews. However, as reported in Chapter 3, a reason that two-thirds (66%) took the course, was to increase knowledge and because they were committed to working in the sector (65%), so these changes around responsibility and promotion were not the priority for many taking the course.

A few providers noted that the course does not always lead to increased outcomes for the trainees, and instead it focuses on improving outcomes for children.

Very few of the trainees that come out with Early Years Teaching Status actually go into well paid jobs. It doesn't make a difference to their outcomes, but it does make a difference to the children's outcomes. –
EYITT provider

Commitment from the workforce to stay in the sector

Future plans

Within Cohort 1 and 2, almost half of the trainees had over 5 years' experience⁴⁰ (45% and 49% respectively) at the point of starting the course. This indicates that a significant proportion of trainees were already committed to the sector. After they completed their course, trainees were asked to consider career plans in the next 12 months. Nearly half planned to stay in the same setting or role (49%). Around one-in-five (18%) planned to move to a new role within the same setting, and 15% planned to move to a new role within a different setting.

Over one-third (35%) planned to do further qualifications relating to early years in the next 12 months after the course. During the qualitative interviews, trainees noted specific courses they were interested in, such as forest school training, SEND training, mental health training, and gaining QTS. Some noted how the course increased their confidence in their own abilities and made them feel more confident in the EY sector and therefore more likely to continue upskilling.

⁴⁰ This data was captured in the Cohort 1 end of training survey and the Cohort 2 baseline survey.

From doing the course I'm a lot more confident to go and do more training...if it's something I need to do in order to progress, I feel comfortable to do that now...because I've managed to do the course and I've managed to pass, so it's given me the confidence to go out and do more if I need to. – *EYITT trainee*

A few trainees and managers noted that QTS could be a next step after EYITT, and providers shared some trainees had gone onto this. As reported in Chapter 3, there were some frustrations shared by trainees, managers and providers that EYITT did not lead to QTS. Taking a QTS course was an option that was being considered by some trainees that were interviewed.

Satisfaction with working in the sector

As shown in Table 5.2, the majority of Cohort 2 trainees reported that they felt satisfied working in the EY sector both before and after training (98% before, and 27 out of 27 after), at least some of the time. To a lesser extent, most also reported feeling frustrated with working in the EY sector, at least some of the time, both before and after training (86% before and 23 out of 27 after). Thoughts of leaving their current setting, and thoughts of getting a new job outside of the EY sector remained consistent both before and after completing the course, at around four in ten.

Table 5.2 Trainee sentiment about the Early Years sector, before and after EYITT

	Cohort 2 baseline	Cohort 2 follow up
	Percent	Number
I feel satisfied working in the EY sectors at least sometimes	98%	27/27
I feel frustrated working in the EY sector at least sometimes	86%	23/27
I think about leaving my current setting at least sometimes	43%	12/27
I think about getting a job out of the EY sector at least sometimes	39%	10/27

Source: A6/C5 The next questions ask about your expectations around staying in the early years sector.

We understand that plans can change at any time, so please respond based on how you currently feel about working in the early years sector. Which of the following best describes the type of early years setting you currently work in? Cohort 2 Baseline (145-147), Cohort 2 Follow up (27)

During the qualitative interviews, some trainees reported increased levels of satisfaction with their role and with working in the EY sector more generally, as a result of the course. Multiple trainees noted how it bolstered their enthusiasm and gave them a confirmed

sense of how important the early years of a child's life are in terms of development. Providers often reported this too. Equally, the course allowed trainees with more experience to renew their general interest in the sector and their profession, acting as a bit of a refresh and restart.

I think it [the course] helped me find my passion again for teaching, because as a manager I ended up getting bogged down with a lot of paperwork as part of my role as well, so it made me focus back on the reason why I went into it [early years] in the first place. – *EYITT trainee*

Staff turnover and vacancies

Data from the SCEYP was also used to assess the qualification levels of staff that left their setting. As detailed in Table 5.3, 34% of those leaving SBPs had a relevant Level 6 qualification, and 11% of those leaving GBPs had a Level 6 qualification. Over half of those who left GBPs had Level 3 as their highest qualification (57%), and the same applied to 42% of the staff who left SBPs. These findings are proportional to the qualification levels of the total number of staff, as detailed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Highest qualification level of staff leaving an early years setting

	All group-based providers	All school-based providers
Level 1 or below	16%	5%
Level 2	10%	11%
Level 3	57%	42%
Level 4 or 5	7%	7%
Level 6	11%	34%

Source: Childcare and Early Years Provider survey, 2023.

In qualitative interviews with trainees, pay was a factor that could impact on their decision to leave the EY sector. For example, some trainees reported feeling dissatisfied with salaries, noting that for less commitment they could get the same, if not more, money working at a supermarket.

Alongside this, trainees noted the ceiling in the EY sector of progression. Once they reach a certain level some trainees felt there was nowhere else to go, and with increasing financial stressors working in EY settings was becoming less viable.

It's getting financially difficult to justify [working in EY] at the moment, especially when there is nowhere to go with it ... it's not all about money but it is getting to a point now where you've got to be able to live. –

EYITT trainee

Managers also reported the challenges of hiring a member of staff for a Level 6 position (ideally EYTS or QTS) due to limited numbers, and instead they were a 'nice to have', rather than a necessity. Managers suggested that there were few people with this qualification, whereas there were many more people with a Level 3. Additionally, sometimes a school's requirements are specific, such as a pedagogy, therefore recruiting someone with the right background and a Level 6 would be difficult. Therefore, while managers were interested in employing staff with a Level 6 qualification, as it is valued, there are a limited number of people with this qualification, meaning managers are more likely to employ those with a Level 3 qualification.

Conclusions

This section summarises the conclusions from the evaluation with reference to the research questions and the mechanisms and outcomes noted in the Theory of Change.

Did the number of graduates in the sector increase following introduction of increased EYITT funding?

The number of trainees who took up EYITT increased during the same period that DfE increased the number of funded places. However, the number of places that were unfilled by some providers remained sizeable (compared to the maximum amount they could deliver). Filling places was a bigger challenge for university providers, whereas SCITTs were able to fill their courses and had an appetite to take on more trainees, if the funding was available.

There was an increase in the proportion of staff in school based providers that held EYTS, from 18% in 2021 to 24% in 2023. This remained steady for group based providers, from 19% in 2021 to 21% in 2023. The intended short-term outcome of an increased number of graduates within the early years workforce, and an increased number of settings with a graduate has been partially realised. When the next iteration of ITT Census data is published in 2025, this should be reviewed again.

Trainees that completed EYITT in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 mostly have joined or remained in the early years sector, based on their own self report. Of trainees surveyed, the majority stayed in the same setting they were in before training, which tended to be PVI. There was a sense that EYITT helps with career development, as the most common outcome of the course was an increase in responsibilities, followed by an improvement in job satisfaction. However, whilst a high proportion of trainees that remained positive about the sector before and after EYITT (at least some of the time), there was a sizeable proportion who were frustrated to work in the sector, which did not change before and after training.

What variation is there in take-up of EYITT?

The take-up of EYITT varied from 2019/2020, to 2023/2024. Overall take-up of funded places increased, and the graduate-employment route remained by far the most common route. Trainees tended to be female, White and without a disability, however the age of trainees has changed over time, moving from an under 25 majority, to an over 25 majority. From the available data, it is not clear why this has been the case.

How could take-up of EYITT places be improved?

Providers typically wanted to increase their course take up, however they reported a broad spectrum of challenges. Some of these recruitment challenges were related to what they perceived as wider issues in the Early Years sector. This included the sector typically being lower paying, and with less benefits, than the teaching sector (e.g. holidays, career frameworks). This was seen as challenge to attracting graduates into the sector. The suggestions put forward by those that took part in the research need further research and testing for viability.

Other challenges were more unique to the course itself and related to what gaining the qualification offered graduates. There were suggestions to raise the status of EYTS, by making it mandatory for all settings to have a member of staff with this qualification, and by making EYTS an eligible qualification to teach in reception classes of all school types. Another suggestion was to further professionalise the sector, with clear progression pathways and frameworks for support after the qualification, to align with the support on offer to Early Career Teachers.

Releasing staff for training was an issue for EYITT managers, and providers often faced this challenge upon recruitment to the course, due to broader sector recruitment and retention issues. Settings being able to release staff was a key assumption of the policies success, as set out in the mechanism section of the Theory of Change. Suggested solutions to this challenge included increasing the employer funding, permitting placements within a different part of the same setting (e.g. that the trainee already works in), and adopting more flexible start dates so that the course does not always start in September, which is a key period for early years enrolments. All these suggestions were seen as ways to make it easier for managers to release staff to the course and therefore could increase take-up.

Providers also felt there was a general lack of awareness of the course in the wider sector. Enhanced marketing by providers (for example through links with early years networks and local authorities), alongside DfE assisting with awareness raising in the sector, would be particularly helpful in helping to increase awareness, and therefore take-up.

The final challenge faced related to the course eligibility criteria. There was anecdotal feedback that prospective trainees with a degree were being held back by not having a grade 4 pass in GCSE Science. Some providers queried whether this is necessary for someone studying for their EYTS, and this area would benefit from further research/insight.

Did EYITT trainees report changes in their skills, knowledge, confidence and practice?

Studying EYITT was a positive step for most, and the short-term outcome of increasing confidence, knowledge and skills, as set out in the Theory of Change, was realised.

The experience of the course was good, and most came away with an increase in their self-reported skills, knowledge, confidence and practice, in working in the Early Years sector. It should be noted that trainees that take this course, often have years of experience in the sector, as well as a degree, and therefore enter the course with a strong base level of knowledge, skills and confidence. Therefore, in some instances, skills, knowledge and confidence related to specific topics did not improve significantly, due to a strong base at the point of starting the course. Despite this, even for experienced staff, there was plenty of benefit of taking the course, in terms of solidifying what was already known and deepening understanding. Trainees appeared to make a difference in their setting as a result of taking the course, bringing newfound knowledge and confidence to enact positive changes. This included knowledge sharing in the setting with other members of staff and being able to work better with specific children (including children with SEND), based on knowledge they developed on the course.

Does increased funding for EYITT places impact vacancies and turnover in the EY workforce?

Looking forward, whilst a sizable minority received a pay increase or promotion since completing EYITT, there were common frustrations related to career progression and sector pay. This is reflected in the continued appetite among some trainees to look for jobs outside the sector.

The most common reasons for trainees taking EYITT were related to increasing confidence and knowledge. As knowledge and confidence building were the main motivations to take EYITT, this could explain why a lack of pay or role progression is not encouraging more to look at moving outside of their setting or sector or discouraging some from applying.

Thoughts about leaving the sector were not altered by the course, around four in ten thought about leaving at least some of the time, both before and after the training. Those that were committed to the sector before the training, remained committed. According to SCEYP data, one-third of staff leaving SBPs in 2023 were those with a Level 6⁴¹ qualification, while around one-in-ten who left GBPs held this level. The qualitative research with providers, managers and trainees suggests that this could be related to completing a QTS course and moving to teaching in schools outside of the early years,

⁴¹ By this, we mean an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 6 or higher

for increased pay, benefits and status. Tracking leavers from the early years sector, especially those who completed EYITT, into different sectors, would be interesting.

Vacancies for staff with an early years related Level 6 qualification were uncommon due to the lack of people with this qualification in the workforce. If a Level 6 qualified member of staff left a setting, managers felt that it was unlikely they would be able to fill the position with another recruit with a relevant Level 6 qualification. However, there was limited data related to Level 6 vacancies, due to the scarcity of people with a Level 6. Therefore, this research has not been able to fully answer this research question in relation to the impact of the increase in funded places on vacancies.

Annex

Breakdown of respondents

Table A1: Demographic breakdown of Cohort 1 respondents- age

Variable	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)	Cohort 1: Follow up (Number)
Age: Under 25	24	15%	3
Age: 26-35	69	42%	9
Age: 36-45	43	26%	11
Age: 46-55	23	14%	8
Age: 56+	2	1%	-
Age: Prefer not to say	2	1%	-

Source: Cohort 1 End of Training Survey (163), Cohort 1 Follow up (31)

Table A2: Demographic breakdown of Cohort 1 respondents- sex

Variable	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)	Cohort 1: Follow up (Number)
Sex: Female	160	98%	31
Sex: Male	3	2%	-

Source: Cohort 1 End of Training Survey (163), Cohort 1 Follow up (31)

Table A3: Breakdown of Cohort 1 respondents- highest level of qualifications

Variable	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)	Cohort 1: Follow up (Number)
Highest level of qualification: Level 5 (e.g. DipHE)	1	1%	1
Highest level of qualification: Level 6 (e.g. degree with honours)	115	71%	18
Highest level of qualification: Level 7 (e.g. postgraduate qualification, such as PGCE or Masters)	46	28%	12
Highest level of qualification: Prefer not to say	1	1%	-

Source: Cohort 1 End of Training Survey (163), Cohort 1 Follow up (31)

Table A4: Breakdown of Cohort 1 respondents- mode of study

Variable	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)	Cohort 1: Follow up (Number)
Mode of study: Full time	83	51%	9
Mode of study: Part time	59	36%	17
Mode of study: Don't know	21	13%	5

Source: Cohort 1 End of Training Survey (163), Cohort 1 Follow up (31)

Table A5: Breakdown of Cohort 1 respondents- course type

Variable	Cohort 1: End of training (Number)	Cohort 1: End of training (Percentage)	Cohort 1: Follow up (Number)
Course type: Graduate employment based	114	88%	28
Course type: Graduate entry	19	12%	3

Source: Cohort 1 End of Training Survey (163), Cohort 1 Follow up (31)

Table A6: IDACI decile for C1F trainees' areas of work

IDACI Decile	Cohort 1: Follow up
Decile 1-2 – most deprived	3
Decile 3-4	2
Decile 5-6	5
Decile 7-8	5
Decile 9-10 – least deprived	7
Did not disclose postcode ⁴²	6

Source: Cohort 1 Follow up, all who still work in the Early Years sector (28)

Table A7: Demographic breakdown of Cohort 2 respondents-age

Variable	Cohort 2: Baseline (Number)	Cohort 2: Baseline (Percentage)	Cohort 2: Follow up (Number)
Age: Under 25	21	13%	1
Age: 26-35	54	34%	11
Age: 36-45	53	33%	12
Age: 46-55	26	16%	6
Age: 56+	4	3%	-
Age: Prefer not to say	3	2%	-

Source: Cohort 2 baseline (161) and follow up survey (30)

⁴² These trainees responded either 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'

Table A8: Demographic breakdown of Cohort 2 respondents-sex

Variable	Cohort 2: Baseline (Number)	Cohort 2: Baseline (Percentage)	Cohort 2: Follow up (Number)
Sex: Female	154	96%	29
Sex: Male	5	3%	1
Sex: Prefer not to say	2	1%	-

Source: Cohort 2 baseline (161) and follow up survey (30)

Table A9: Breakdown of Cohort 2 respondents- highest level of qualifications

Variable	Cohort 2: Baseline (Number)	Cohort 2: Baseline (Percentage)	Cohort 2: Follow up (Number)
Highest level of qualification: Level 2 (e.g. GCSE grade 4/C or above)	1	1%	-
Highest level of qualification: Level 4 (e.g. CertHE)	1	1%	1
Highest level of qualification: Level 5 (e.g. DipHE)	1	1%	1
Highest level of qualification: Level 6 (e.g. degree with honours)	129	80%	22
Highest level of qualification: Level 7 (e.g. postgraduate qualification, such as PGCE or Masters)	29	18%	6

Source: Cohort 2 baseline (161) and follow up survey (30)

Table A10: Breakdown of Cohort 2 respondents- mode of study

Variable	Cohort 2: Baseline (Number)	Cohort 2: Baseline (Percentage)	Cohort 2: Follow up (Number)
Mode of study: Full time	57	51%	12
Mode of study: Part time	82	35%	17
Mode of study: Don't know	22	14%	1

Source: Cohort 2 baseline (161) and follow up survey (30)

Table A11: Breakdown of Cohort 2 respondents- course type

Variable	Cohort 2: Baseline (Number)	Cohort 2: Baseline (Percentage)	Cohort 2: Follow up (Number)
Course type: Graduate employment based	142	88%	23
Course type: Graduate entry	19	12%	7

Source: Cohort 2 baseline (161) and follow up survey (30)

Table A12: IDACI decile for Cohort 2 Follow Up trainees areas of work

IDACI Decile	Cohort 2: Follow up
Decile 1-2 – most deprived	2
Decile 3-4	5
Decile 5-6	6
Decile 7-8	6
Decile 9-10 – least deprived	3
Did not disclose postcode ⁴³	5

Source: Cohort 2 Follow up survey (27)

Table A13: Percentage of cohorts under the age of 25 between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years

Academic year	Percentage of cohort under the age of 25	Change since previous cohort
2019/20	76%	N/A
2020/21	23%	-53%
2021/22	26%	+3%
2022/23	23%	-3%
2023/24	19%	-4%

Source: ITT Census.

⁴³ These trainees responded either 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'

Table A14: Sex breakdown of cohorts between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years

Academic year	Percentage of cohort reporting as female	Change in female %	Percentage of cohort reporting as male	Change in male %	Percentage of cohort reporting as other sex	Change in other gender %
2019/20	96%	N/A	4%	N/A	0%	N/A
2020/21	97%	+1%	3%	-1%	1%	+1%
2021/22	96%	-1%	3%	0%	0%	-1%
2022/23	95%	-1%	3%	0%	0%	0%
2023/24	94%	-1%	3%	0%	0%	0%

Source: ITT Census.

Table A15: Percentage of cohort who have a disability between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years

Academic year	Percentage of cohort reporting to have a disability	Change since previous cohort
2019/20	10%	N/A
2020/21	8%	-2%
2021/22	9%	+1%
2022/23	7%	-2%
2023/24	13%	+6%

Source: ITT Census.

Table A16: Ethnicity of cohorts between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years

Academic year	Percentage of cohort reporting as Asian	Change in Asian ethnicity %	Percentage of cohort reporting as black	Change in black ethnicity %	Percentage of cohort reporting as mixed ethnicity	Change in mixed ethnicity %	Percentage of cohort reporting as white	Change in white ethnicity %	Percentage of cohort reporting as other ethnicity	Change in other ethnicity %
2019/20	7%	N/A	4%	N/A	2%	N/A	87%	N/A	0%	N/A
2020/21	11%	+4%	5%	+1%	3%	+1%	81%	-6%	1%	+1%
2021/22	9%	-2%	4%	-1%	3%	0%	83%	+2%	1%	0%
2022/23	8%	-1%	3%	-1%	1%	-2%	87%	+4%	1%	0%
2023/24	13%	+5%	5%	+2%	3%	+2%	78%	-9%	1%	0%

Source: ITT Census.

Theory of Change

Figure 7-1. EYITT Theory of Change

Situation	<p>Demand for Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) has increased dramatically in recent years, as many individuals are attracted to a career with the rewards of working with young children at a formative time and the difference they could make. It is particularly important to secure and scale up the pipeline of highly qualified staff at this time.</p> <p>The number of places that DfE are funding on the graduate based routes have been increased.</p>	Aims	<p>Increased funding to EYITT aims to raise the quality of the EY workforce, by improving the skills and qualifications levels of the Early Years workforce, and secondarily to address the delays in children's early development as a result of the pandemic (specifically in relation to children's speech and language development).</p>
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Inputs / Activities	Outputs	Change mechanism	Outcomes	Impacts
Inputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE EY Workforce Unit DfE ITT funding team in Teaching Workforce Directorate DfE grant funding for EYITT EY ITT Providers (HEIs / SCITTs) EY ITT Trainees time (n=x hours/y days) EY settings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Employers Placement settings 	<p>DfE run the allocations process</p> <p>EYITT providers bid for places</p> <p>DfE confirms outcomes of allocations process</p> <p>EYITT providers</p> <p>EYITT providers recruit the EYITT course for academic year ahead</p>	<p>Motivation within individuals, settings and the sector for EYITT completion</p> <p>EYITT providers having what they need to deliver courses (e.g. tutors/placements)</p> <p>EYITT trainees graduate from EYITT course at EYITT provider and</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>Immediately post graduation (1 year)</p> <p>For EYITT graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved confidence Improved knowledge Improved skills <p>For the sector / workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased take up of EYITT qualification 	<p>Long term future</p> <p>For children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved outcomes for children at the end of reception year Improved outcomes for disadvantaged children at the end of reception year

Inputs / Activities	Outputs	Change mechanism	Outcomes	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded number of funded places for initial teacher training in EY <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE run the allocations process EYITT providers bid for places DfE confirms outcomes of allocations process EYITT providers EYITT providers recruit the EYITT course for academic year ahead Eligible EYITT trainees go through application process Funding delivered to EYITT providers from DfE as course starts Trainees / settings receive bursary from the EYITT provider* Training taking place EYITT trainees demonstrate they can deliver activities at EYTS level of quality Trainees graduate and gain EYTS EYITT graduates employed in EYTS capacity 	<p>Eligible EYITT trainees go through application process</p> <p>Funding delivered to EYITT providers from DfE as course starts</p> <p>Trainees / settings receive bursary from the EYITT provider</p> <p>Training taking place</p> <p>EYITT trainees demonstrate they can deliver activities at EYTS level of quality</p> <p>Trainees graduate and gain EYTS</p>	<p>improve their knowledge/skills</p> <p>Trainees have the opportunity to apply their knowledge whilst they are learning</p> <p>Settings can find cover for their staff on the EYITT course</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of graduates within the early years workforce Increased number of early years settings with a graduate <p>Mid-term</p> <p>12 months onwards</p> <p>For EYITT graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved commitment from workforce to staying in the sector Graduates take further CPD Graduates better able to provide support for children with communication and language development <p>For settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher level of practice within settings among other members of staff 	<p>For the sector / workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced Level 6 vacancies Lower staff turnover Higher qualified staff in the sector Improved settings quality of practice in Graduates have long term commitment to CPD and training Improved knowledge of progression routes in the sector

Assumptions

- Potential trainees care about and are driven by working with young children and working in the sector
- Graduates remain in EY once they have graduated from EYITT
- Settings want to send their employees on EYITT
- Gaining EYTS qualifications help with retention
- All EYITT providers delivering sufficient content/value/quality
- Settings want to participate
- Increasing funded places will increase the number of trainees
- The increased number of trainees on the programme does not impact on the quality of the training



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