



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Qualitative Research with Shortage Subject Teaching Candidates: The Journey to Teacher Training

Research report

October 2014

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Introduction

Background and methodology

Overview and aims

This report summarises the results of a programme of detailed qualitative research undertaken with teaching candidates on the journey to teacher training, also known as the 'Customer Journey'. The journey is defined as beginning at initial interest in teaching and ending when a teaching candidate takes a place on teacher training.

The research method comprised 90 in-depth interviews and 5 online focus group sessions with teaching candidates, focusing on applicants for teacher training in 2013/14. In total, 118 teaching candidates were consulted either by depth-interview or online. Almost all had made an application to teacher training at some stage (only 2 dropping out of the journey before this) and the majority had accepted a place on teacher training in the 2013/14 cohort, while a minority had not taken up a place.

The research fieldwork was undertaken by BMG Research on behalf of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) between 28th January and 3rd April 2014.

The topic guides used by moderators to provide the thematic framework for discussions are provided as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Candidates were asked to discuss their motivations to explore teaching as a career, the prompts that led them to consider teacher training and their choice of routes to teacher training and experience of those routes. Where challenges had been met, these challenges were explored in detail, including any support deemed to have been missing.

This research sits within a broader research programme on the customer journey¹, which includes a careers fair exit survey and an online survey of applicants to graduate teacher training registry² (GTTR)³. All elements share three key objectives:

- to help inform the NCTL's marketing and communications strategy;
- to deepen NCTL's understanding of the journey to teacher training, with a particular focus on shortage subjects;
- to inform the School Direct⁴ (SD) routes as these continue to develop.

¹ This report is one of four documents published on gov.uk – see page 159 for details

² GTTR was the admissions system for post graduate courses – this has now been replaced by UCAS.

³ Please refer to the Glossary of Terms (appendix 3) for definitions used throughout this report. The term 'GTTR applicants' is used for candidates applying to university/provider-led training.

⁴ School Direct is school-led training course where schools recruit trainees onto their School Direct course with a job in mind for them. See <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/teacher-training-options/school-based-training> for more information.

Method and sample profile

Respondents were recruited to the research from two sources; from among those who consented to further research in the online survey of applicants to GTTR, and from the NCTL database of Teacher Information Line (Teaching Line) registrants.

BMG contacted candidates by phone, using an agreed booking script to recruit participants and screen out any who were ineligible under the criteria of the research. Quotas were set by three variables:

- By teaching subject, with a focus on shortage subjects. All respondents were in shortage subjects with the exception of one online focus group which comprised a mix of non-shortage subject candidates.
- By application channel: GTTR (i.e. university-led provision through the 2013/14 GTTR portal), School Direct (fee paying or salaried), and both GTTR and School Direct. The greatest focus was on School Direct, to explore this in most detail.
- By journey status, whereby Group A are now on teacher training/did not experience significant barriers, while Group B were able to discuss barriers in more detail due to having been unsuccessful, rejected offers, or for other reasons not gone on to teacher training. In depth interviews the target was a 2:1 ratio of Group A to Group B candidates, and in the online groups the target was all Group A.

BMG's research recruiters also aimed for an even spread of candidates by shortage subject across the depth interviews. Specific subjects were targeted for the online groups.

Depth interviews lasting 30-50 minutes were undertaken by telephone at times convenient to participants, including evenings and weekends, and rearranged as necessary to meet the requirements of candidates' busy training calendars. Online focus groups were 90 minutes duration, from 6pm-7.30pm on weekday evenings. All participants received a thank you payment of £15 in high street shopping vouchers, administered by BMG Research.

The profile of all 118 candidates consulted through depth interviews and online focus groups (also referred to in this report as 'respondents') is provided in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 includes total counts which are then split by research method to the right.

It is important to note that the sample comprises almost exclusively (with the exception of 2 candidates) those who had made an application to teacher training at some stage. As such this study does not aim to identify barriers and challenges among those who discontinue their journey before making an application. However, it probes the barriers and concerns experienced by those who do go on to make an application and these are likely to be a good proxy for barriers and challenges for candidates as a whole.

Figure 1: Sample profile – all research participants (118)

Subject		Application Route(s)		Journey Status		Life-stage ⁵	
15 Chemistry	13 depths 2 online	35 GTTR only	21 depths 14 online	87 Group A (on initial teacher training (ITT))	69 depths 28 online	50 career changers	39 depths 11 online
18 Computer science	13 depths 5 online	31 GTTR and School Direct	28 depths 3 online	31 Group B (not on ITT/ barriers)	All depths	33 career finders	29 depths 4 online
14 Design and technology (DT)	13 depths 1 online	52 School Direct only	41 depths 11 online			35 students	22 depths 13 online
18 Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)	17 depths 1 online						
20 Physics	15 depths 5 online						
26 Maths	19 depths 7 online						
7 non shortage: 3 English, 2 Biology, 2 Geography	All online						

⁵ Life-stage is defined whereby students are a full-time students or graduated in the last year, career finders finished full-time studies more than a year ago but are still in the early stages of developing a career and career finders followed a different career path for a number of years, and are now looking to pursue a career in teaching.

Understanding the report

Qualitative research involves interactive processes between the researcher and the respondent. This interaction provides a way of probing underlying attitudes and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. A topic guide is used to provide prompts to guide the discussion. However, moderators are prepared and able to discuss new issues or concepts described by the respondent. It is frequently the case that the most enlightened responses come from the least structured elements of the discussion. This format enables the interviewer to probe more deeply to uncover issues of interest to the research programme, and can identify highlight pertinent issues that may not have been considered by the original brief.

It should also be noted that participants in depth interviews might hold views that are based on incorrect information. It is the moderator's role to explore and report participants' perceptions and not necessarily to correct any misunderstandings.

Quotes are for illustrative purposes and not all interview material is presented. In the online group extracts, different colours differentiate between respondents and the moderators questions are in black underlined. Depth interview quotation labels summarise the respondent profile including subject, application route(s), whether they are a student, career finder or career changer and whether they are in group A or B (see definitions in 'Method and sample profile' above). Where a quote is not provided in verbatim format it is labelled 'Interviewer summary'.

Several case studies are provided for illustrative purposes. Names have been removed to safeguard the anonymity of participants in the research.

The findings are based on small samples, designed to cover a cross-section of types of teaching candidates, but should not be confused with statistical representation. Therefore, numbers are not provided except in two specific circumstances where a more quantitative measure was required. Firstly the online focus group poll on awareness of free school meals (FSM) related funding, and secondly, in the final section where all respondents were asked to describe their journey to teacher training 'in one word'.

When reading this report it is important to bear in mind that the sample consulted were primarily candidates applying to join teacher training in Autumn 2013 and as such their experiences and views may be different to those in the current application year. Indeed, some of their suggestions for change may refer to aspects of the journey to teacher training that have subsequently been changed or developed.

BMG would like to thank the NCTL and Department for Education (DfE) for their support throughout this research, and to all of the teaching candidates who took part in interviews, for their valued time and insights.

Key findings

The customer journey is highly inconsistent, varying in length and in the points at which candidates experience motivation or challenge. The approach taken by candidates is, likewise, not standardised. Some are highly proactive and make wide use of information and support available, while others are more passive and reactive.

However, the research identifies that candidates often share common sources of motivation and experience similar fears and concerns. They also express common needs and demands of NCTL, which are summarised throughout this report.

The Get into Teaching campaign⁶ is valued across its channels of support, in particular the website, recruitment advisors, school experience programme and teaching line.

While few respondents had attended a NCTL event, those who did often found them pivotal points on their journey; receiving vital one-to-one advice here, or discovering the training path which they ultimately pursued. Some described these as 'one-stop-shops'.

While wishing to retain the comprehensive level of information online, candidates emphasise the need for one-to-one advice to supplement this. This is particularly sought-after when making decisions about route selection and funding, since these tend to be the most high-stakes decisions, while also considered complex. Some answered the question 'what was missing?' by describing a tailored one-to-one advice service. Given that the majority of the sample were shortage subject candidates and in many cases likely to be eligible for Premier Plus⁷, this suggests that not all of those eligible had engaged with this service, or were aware of their eligibility. Those who did use Premier Plus advisors commended them for their accessibility and expertise and considered that they were helped along their journey to training by their guidance and encouragement.

In general therefore, the preference is for online information backed up by prompt one-to-one support in some format (e.g. recruitment advisor or helpline). E-mails are valued for time-specific information, while hard copy is valued for any key reference materials that candidates may wish to keep and refer back-to through their journey. Awareness of webchat is low but those who have used it like it.

Experience in a school, and support to get this experience, is considered very important. Feedback suggests that candidates would like schools to be encouraged to be as accommodating as possible, as many candidates approach them directly. Experience is a vital part of the journey and is often the key way that candidates reassure themselves

⁶ <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching>

⁷ Premier Plus is a service providing exclusive benefits aimed at candidates with a 2:2 or above and who are interested in training to teach one of the shortage subjects. For more information go to <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/premier-plus?keywords=premier+plus>

that they will suit teaching as a career, and be able to cope with issues that concern them, such as behaviour management. Requirements for application aside, how much candidates feel the need to do this depends largely on how much experience candidates already hold; many having worked previously as a school technician, teaching assistant or teacher abroad for example. However, even where a respondent has worked in a school, support to get wider experience is also valued.

Behaviour management is a significant concern for candidates, in particular whole class-management, and extreme bad-behaviour situations. Family and friends with teaching experience often play an important role in helping candidates work through these concerns, but candidates also benefit from reassurance and information from official government sources, in addition to support in gaining school experience early in the process as mentioned.

Advertisements about School Direct (including online and posters) were triggers for some respondents to begin exploring teacher training and it was common for candidates to acknowledge either a direct impact or more subliminal influence from advertising. Likewise, the level of support received from Get into Teaching channels was described as encouraging and motivating. Where criticisms were made of some of the NCTL materials, this tended to relate to them appearing 'too glossy' and focusing on selling teaching as a career rather than preparing candidate for the journey ahead. Where possible, the more advertising-focused materials should be reserved only for those at the very start of their journey, and more 'real life' case studies from trainees, mentors and so on, should be incorporated in communications throughout the journey.

While it may not be feasible to extend the recruitment advisor service to all candidates, this service was highly valued by those who used it.

Candidates value 'real-life' input such as case studies and testimonials of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) or current teacher trainees who can give the benefit of their experiences. This includes information on what to expect from each route into training (now that School Direct has gone through a full year as a national programme), what to expect from teaching, how to juggle family and training, and so on. Feedback therefore raises the question whether NCTL could play more of a role in connecting potential candidates with mentors, trainees and graduate trainees or even with other potential candidates early in the process (including via online means).

Views and experiences were not significantly differentiated across the shortage subjects, with the exception of design and technology, where more candidates tended to have experienced barriers in terms of funding to train, confusion in the application process, and finding places in their specialism.

A number of the sample (many studying to teach MFL but some also studying to teach other subjects) were born overseas but now living in the UK. These were relatively unfamiliar with the UK education sector. This group described obstacles relating to this

and made requests for targeted support to help familiarise them with the UK education sector, navigate the routes and understand, as early as possible, the equivalency of their qualifications, and other requirements.

Bursaries, School Direct salaries and scholarships provided by government are widely described as 'critical' to training. In some cases, hearing what funding was available to train had been the main initial trigger to explore teacher training. This was particularly the case for career changers and finders, although it was also rare to find students willing to state that they 'would have trained to be a teacher anyway' without the funding available.

Choice of school and provider were often made on the basis of location (with travelling distance and affordability highly interlinked), followed by whether the School Direct school was a 'good school' and the provider had a 'good reputation'. Respondents tended to look for School Direct schools where they could learn from high standards but also importantly where they anticipated that behaviour management would be less challenging, using word of mouth/networking to research this, but also taking account of Ofsted grade. Friendliness and school ethos were also important. These considerations, in particular the emphasis placed on location, meant that the FSM-uplift on the bursary was not considered to make an impact on decision-making, despite a suggestion from the poll that more were aware of this than were unaware (approximately 6 in 10 aware).

Reasons for selecting a School Direct route into teacher training include the option to earn a regular income on the salaried route, the ability to train locally, and the ability to learn on the job, a particular preference for those who had already undertaken many years of academia, were older, or who had prior experience in a school. School Direct salaried was often considered the first-choice route in, and the one to take if you had the required experience. Indeed, many of those on the fee paying route said that they had looked at the salaried option first but found they were not eligible or that there were no places remaining. Some candidates had investigated the routes in great detail, and were certain their chosen route was the most financially viable for their circumstances. However, many had been too rushed to research routes and there were many candidates generally confused on the differences, and what might have been possible on the other route.

Reasons for applying to GTTR for (university-led) teacher training include seeing this as a more stable, established route at that time, the post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) as a more widely-recognised qualification (not always achieved through the SD route), more support in terms of education research/theory from university tutors, and the expectation of achieving a broader view on teaching through having multiple placements. Some candidates also did not feel ready to enter a school, wanting support from the university as they made the step into the classroom.

Level of familiarity with routes into training was also a factor in decision-making on routes. It was not unusual, when the research was undertaken, for trainees in university-led training to not have heard of School Direct, or to have not become aware of it until

starting their training. In some cases universities appear to have marketed the GTTR route so strongly that candidates were not aware other routes existed. Likewise in a small number of cases, candidates training via School Direct had not heard of the GTTR route into (university-led) training. This tended to be when their application had been prompted by a school they worked in e.g. they were working there in a non-teaching role and were approached by a senior colleague.

Some candidates described the routes into teacher training as too complex and felt that both these, and funding options for teacher training, should be simplified. Where respondents sought more clarity on funding options, they wanted this in the form of a summarised 'grid' or similar online, backed up by an advisor who could provide one-to-one clarification to help guide a candidate based on their own personal circumstances and needs.

Candidates described a range of reasons for applying when they did, and quite commonly considered the process a 'rush'. In addition to individual circumstances such as completing academic qualifications, leaving an existing career and so on, time was added in some cases by clarifying funding options and by finding and undertaking school experience. Support in getting candidates school experience quicker, as well as providing clarity on routes into training and funding early on could help earlier applications from some candidates. Advice from university tutors is likely to be important in helping students achieve clarity in a timely manner. However, some felt that the NCTL could not have done anything to have made them apply earlier.

In terms of the application process, noting that candidates were describing the process in 2013 (which has since changed), the most significant quibbles were with the process of applying to schools, in particular the searchability of the list delays in response from schools, and the inability to remove a school from your maximum of three even after receiving a 'decline'. Some found the process repetitive and considered that a standardised School Direct application form should be in use by all schools.

After application it was rare that candidates encountered hurdles that risked them taking up their place. Where barriers arose these were usually financial, but others were considered to be 'teething problems' as the School Direct system bedded in, including schools being unable to answer questions from candidates early on about how the School Direct training would work. As such these problems are now likely to have lessened.

Asked to sum up their journey into teacher training in one word, the most common word was challenging (12 mentions), followed by exciting (8), rollercoaster (6), long (6), and stressful (5). Easy and difficult were each mentioned by four respondents. Four mentions were also made of smooth, rewarding and confusing. This reflects that the customer journey is experienced very differently by different candidates but that it is rigorous and that most typically candidates find it challenging and exciting.

Motivations to teach

The backgrounds of candidates in the sample are extremely wide-ranging and include those coming into teaching straight from university, mature students, and mothers taking it up as a new career after taking a career break for childcare. Others were moving into teaching from a range of other careers, including information technology (IT), engineering, finance, healthcare, media, translation, retail, and hairdressing, as well as research/academia, training/adult education roles and teaching assistant/school technician roles.

The length of the journey to teacher training varies widely. For some respondents their interest in teaching began less than a year ago, while for others it began up to 30 years ago. For candidates in the student⁸ category in particular '*I was always interested*' was a common response, while 'between 3 and 5 years ago' was perhaps most common among career finders and changers.

The stage before actively exploring teaching can be lengthy. At this stage teaching exists at the back of the mind as a possibility for 'one day', but candidates related how 'the time wasn't right' due to a range of circumstances and commitments, or simply not feeling ready.

I think I just felt that financially it wasn't the best decision at the time because I had a house to pay for and bills and things to pay, and also I just think I didn't feel mature enough. I think I was probably 25 or so at the time and I just didn't feel like I was actually mature enough to be in a classroom in front of children.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Prompts to explore teaching as a career

A range of motivations act as triggers to candidates starting their journey, prompting their interest in teaching as a career.

Experience: It was very common for respondents to mention experience in education, leadership or training as a trigger to them exploring teaching as a career. This included teaching abroad, working with schools as part of a (non-education-specific) degree course or working in-schools as a technician. Respondents also mentioned wider experience with children such as leading a pack of brownies or scouts. Career finders and changers likewise mentioned work initiatives that brought them into contact with children as well as experience training other adults, which informed them that they had the drive and the potential to teach.

⁸ See Glossary of Terms

I certainly have enjoyed the teaching aspects or training roles that I've had. I thought that, obviously, I'm just applying it to a different age group.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

The following respondent had gained exposure to teaching through his previous role with the NHS.

One of the initiatives that I had brought into the department was to link up with a local sixth form college, so that the sixth form pupil could be exposed to medical physics. Through that initiative I became rather excited at the thought of actually teaching A level physics.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Becoming a parent was mentioned as a similar motivating factor. Respondents said that bringing up children gave them confidence they could teach. It also gave them insight into how important teachers are in shaping children's futures, which motivated them to want to serve the next generation.

Having children made it real for me... I can appreciate how education can really influence a person's learning, family, and life prospects.

Maths, GTTR and School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

I think having a son with special needs; I think it's given me an awful lot of insight into how kids are. His school sort of gave up on him when it came to academics... they could've done an awful lot more and... he's been very difficult to bring up and exhausting, but on the other hand, very rewarding when you make the breakthroughs... I think I've learnt an awful lot because of that as well, and I think that I could actually help kids and maybe do things that they'd never dream of doing.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The following extract from the online focus group of physics trainees underlines the importance of experience as a trigger, alongside some of the other triggers to explore teaching which are detailed below.

Before you began exploring the options/ routes into teaching, what sparked your interest in teaching?

I had taught before abroad, and needed a training course in England to be able to teach here.

My experiences and teachers when I was at school.

I had thought about teaching in the past but chose to go into business instead. After being in a job I hated for a while I decided to take the plunge and get back into science but through education.

Personally, I was working in a training role in my previous career and was really enjoying it. I have many friends who teach and my knowledge of what they were doing inspired me to switch careers.

I had returned from an operational tour with the Army and had always enjoyed working with students in the army cadet force so decided to go to uni and get a degree with the aim of becoming a teacher.

Physics online focus group

Sector initiatives that may be designed primarily to bring young people into contact with careers in shortage subjects can therefore also play a role in bringing employees from those job sectors into teaching.

At my current employer, we do a lot of work with secondary schools, doing sustainability and solutions for the planet type thing. We've done it for the past three and a half years and that's got me really thinking about it again, working with the kids.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Projects within (non-education-specific) graduate and postgraduate degree courses that bring students into contact with children can likewise provide the spark of initial interest.

I did some modules in my final year. It was actually called maths and education, which involved placement in a school and that's when I realised that I wanted to get into teaching, basically.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Because, we had placements and we had to choose what placement it was... I went into a disability school, I went into a poor school and a Catholic school... I loved each one. And when I left it I was absolutely gutted so I figured that it would be wise to pursue it as a career really, after comments and stuff like that. I think, once you get into the idea of doing something like this you kind of have to go for it, don't you?

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Passion for the subject: Respondents commonly described their motivation as coming from enjoying the subject and feeling very passionate about it.

I just love teaching science. I've always been a very academic kind of student. I love that profession, so I decided to choose it.

Physics, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

As such, the majority had not moved into this subject (via a subject knowledge enhancement (SKE)) from another subject, although the fact that their degree was in a 'shortage subject' was motivating due to both the bursary provided and the job

opportunities anticipated. (See the section of this report on 'Shortage as a driver' for more information on this).

Work seniors, peers and social circle: Encouragement from friends, family and school colleagues, where appropriate, was said to be important both at the start of the journey ('my girlfriend and all her family are teachers and got me into it'/'the head where I work came to see me') and later, as the candidate progresses on their journey.

I think it's my family and my friends that were most supportive through this journey. My friend read my personal statement and things like that and so did my family... It was just them telling me, 'I think you can do it,' kind of thing that kept me going.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Before I applied I started to do a bit of teaching in the school where I worked as a cover supervisor because one of the staff was off for one term and I felt-, because I hadn't had any training at all, I felt a bit out of my depth and I was like 'I can't do this job', but everyone in the school, all the colleagues encouraged me that I could.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Views on other careers: For career changers and finders, views on other careers are important in their motivation to teach. They described being ready for change. Some were disillusioned with their current role, and perceived teaching as potentially a) more fulfilling; b) something they can do better and c) bringing better career prospects. Those with a family also tended to consider that teaching may be a better fit with their life-stage.

Interviewer summary: He described increased opportunities, number of available jobs, friends who have made the change to teaching and enjoyed it. He enjoys teaching and working with children. Good opportunity to take, potential for career progression, particularly as a science teacher.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Advertising/information prompts: Some candidates could recall specific advertisements or communications as being one of the triggers to them exploring teaching as a career, whether they acted on it at that time, or sometime later when their circumstances changed. For example, one respondent mentioned seeing a tube advertisement in 2009 and following that up by exploring the Department for Education website. Another mentioned an online banner setting out the different routes available to teach. Another mentioned an advertisement on Facebook.

I think it was Get into Teaching - they did, or are still doing, a sort of campaign on Facebook, like an advertising campaign and it was so easy to just click the link and get information on the website or from the phone.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Another mentioned a 'leaflet' about teaching that prompted her to look at the different options (see Figure 2 below).

The three areas of content in advertisements/communications repeated by respondents as important to them taking steps towards teacher training were a) the different routes available; b) that there is a shortage of teachers in this subject; and c) that funding is available. Aspects of job satisfaction in teaching, e.g. the variety of the role, were also encouraging.

A number of other respondents felt that they were likely to have been subliminally impacted by media advertisements and information on teaching as a career, even though they could not recall specifics.

I think it was just looking at them and thinking, 'Yes that's something I'd like to do' but being at university through the whole thing it was such a rush. Three years of my life just went flying past... So I think it was just, sort of like, I noticed them but then didn't really think about them.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Posters maybe of people, like, teaching kids and being like, 'Oh, look, you could do this as well.'

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

Few respondents mentioned TV advertisements without prompting, but when prompted there was some recall. The following remembered one TV advertisement as impacting on her, where a teacher taught science via models of the solar system.

I think maybe that was bringing it, reignited it as well, sort of, seeing that on TV and thinking 'Oh, yes. Maybe I should rethink that.' At that time, I didn't do it and it's only now that I've actually had the courage, I guess, a little bit of courage because it's a big move.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The respondent quoted below could not recall the specifics of any advertisements or communications received, but considered that there was 'a lot of information at the time' which encouraged her to view teaching as a career with a lot of opportunities for people like her. This, combined with dissatisfaction with her current career, and encouragement from peers, motivated her to begin her journey to teacher training.

A couple of ways I think. I know there was a lot of information about it at that time, about getting people that have been in other careers to train as teachers, so that was one of the reasons for the career change, and the other way was I know a couple of people who've actually done it... I got the impression that there's a lot of work available, a lot of positions that they're struggling to fill, so I didn't think it would be too difficult to find a placement.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

School Direct. School Direct itself, and within this the ability to ‘train on the job’, was mentioned as a reason to consider teacher training for the first time. Those looking for a swifter move into the profession, without the need to spend a lot of time at university, were attracted by this more direct route.

Yes, well, nothing that necessarily sparked it, I was interested in looking into it, but then the availability of the Salaried School Direct scheme really actually kind of kicked me into motion because it's a great opportunity to get a PGCE, a good qualification and not get further into debt.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Figure 2: Case study – the role of NCTL engagement for one career changer

A chemistry graduate whose mother had dissuaded her from entering teaching when she was young, having ‘fallen out of love’ with the profession as the job became ‘too all-consuming’. Nevertheless, the graduate had registered with the Teaching Agency while at university and received regular communications that had kept her in the loop with the sector as she developed her career in laboratory-based research. As part of her PhD, she undertook outreach work in local schools and surprised herself at how much she enjoyed inspiring young people. Now aged 29, and having just had a baby, she was keen not to have too long a break from work, but also keen to avoid extensive study, having been a part-time student for 7 years. A hard copy information leaflet landed just as she was just finishing her PhD. The information it contained on Schools Direct, and the bursary available, prompted her to explore her options.

She is not a social media or webchat user, nor did she feel that she wanted to attend an event about teaching. But she investigated her options online and used the telephone teaching line, both of which she described as providing excellent support. Due to circumstances she was unable to attend the school experience offered to her by NCTL, but she had found her own by ‘e-mailing lots of schools’. Having applied late in the year, she was rejected from a salaried place, but she received guidance on how to apply for a fee-paying place, and is now happily on a Schools Direct chemistry placement in a local school. She did have some initial concerns about pupil behaviour – and within this the older children in particular (*‘I’m really tiny and wondered how I’d cope!’*) but she put those concerns aside without reassurance from elsewhere.

She was aware of the FSM-based uplift on bursaries but was primarily focused on getting a place with the schools that she knew, which were local and which had a good reputation. She was unfamiliar with the particular provider at the application stage and so the provider itself was not part of her decision-making.

Without the bursary she would not have applied at this stage, and without School Direct she would not have applied at all; she was not interested in undertaking a PGCE.

With hindsight she would not have done anything differently, and feels that the fee-paying SD route is right for her. The only area where she felt she would have liked more support or information was during the application process. She found the different routes confusing and, after her initial rejection, was unclear who directed her to the placement she is on now; whether she applied via GTTR or direct to SD and the difference between her route and the school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) trainees who study alongside her. She was also unaware about scholarships but was familiar with the table on the website setting out eligibility for different types of funding, and had found this useful.

This candidate summed up her journey to teacher training in one word as 'long'. However, on reflection she felt that nothing would have made her apply earlier. The NCTL 'leaflet' including information on School Direct had landed at just the right time.

Other contact points assisting progression towards teaching

A range of other positive influences were mentioned by candidates as having been instrumental in them progressing their journey towards teacher training.

These included the Jobcentre, Connexions, and university-based careers advice.

I wanted to go into teaching adults actually, like, an evening thing and I wanted to do that and (at the Jobcentre) they said, 'Why don't you do the proper thing?' I said, yes. Well, it would have never have crossed my mind actually... They just said that there is a need for language teachers and, you know, it's a one year training and you get paid.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Had a conversation with a Connexions/careers advisor who gave him information on teaching as a career. Also used various websites including Get into Teaching, UCAS [universities and colleges admissions service], and government career profiles. Conversations with friends who are teachers, and teachers that he knows through school placements.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: He became aware of Teaching Agency website after being directed there from face-to-face contact at Jobcentre.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Student Finance, the Student Loans Company and the British Council were also mentioned.

University tutors were mentioned as a first port of call for some students, while others preferred to go directly to NCTL and other national resources, as evidenced in the online group extract below:

Where did you go for more information or advice in the initial stages

Teaching agency website.

I think I looked at the teaching agency website.

I was at Uni during application process, so could ask staff members in my dept about this.

I spoke to someone from the teaching agency I think.

There was a website where you could search for training providers by region - might that have been the teaching agency?

I went direct to the .gov website as soon as I heard about it as I thought it might give me a greater chance of getting in to teaching.

Physics Online Focus Group

Schools themselves have the potential to prompt their non-QTS (qualified teaching status) staff to take up a School Direct place. Numerous School Direct trainees interviewed had some connection with their school before application, either working there in a non-teaching role or having some experience there. Often they were prompted by that school to make an application and supported through the journey.

They have been very supportive and any problems going on down the line, couldn't find my GCSE results, all these kind of things. They were doing their utmost to try and sort something out, see if they can jump some hurdles here there and everywhere to see if there was any way around things. The school have been fantastic, really, really good.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Once I got interested in it it was things like adverts and I originally spoke to the school beforehand to expand on what would be covered and what I would have to do.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

As mentioned, for many, the idea of teaching as a career is a seed planted early, and it should be noted that many respondents even made mention of former teachers at school. All teachers should therefore be aware of their significant potential power to inspire the next generations of teachers.

My teachers inspired me to keep going with my languages and I wanted to do that for someone.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

The appeal of teaching

Many aspects of teaching were described in discussions on the motivation to explore teacher training. Most mentioned were:

- the ability to make a difference and have a positive impact on people's lives;
- the opportunity to inspire children on a particular subject and make it fun;
- the challenge and variability of the role;
- stability/job security;
- career progression opportunities;
- the holidays/hours (suited parents for example).

Some quotes on these aspects are provided below.

It's a noble profession, you never stop learning, no day is the same, if you're a teacher you get the school holidays. It's not so bad to have a good few weeks every now and then where you don't have to think about work. Rather than working constantly from January to December and have a fixed number of days that you can take weekends or holidays off... I actually decided that even though teaching was really busy during term time, the holidays are times when you still can legitimately pursue things outside of work.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

I've worked with teenagers for the last 30 plus years, as an officer in a unit, so I've always worked with teenagers, and really it's a desire to having less do the service of the police, and to go off and do something worthwhile and making a difference. Instead of in the police making a difference to outcomes in society, the motivation was to make a difference in children's learning opportunities and outcomes.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

The biggest factor was having a better work-life balance. I do a lot of travelling in my current job, it is very stressful and I've seen teaching as an option to do that. I very much always say that I need to be able to do something that I enjoy, so that's a factor also. Ultimately, it's that whole idea of actually being able to do something that actually makes a difference to someone. I don't get that a lot in the job that I do.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

To have the chance to change a child's life is amazing. I mean really amazing!

Computer Science Online Focus Group

The following extract from the maths online group further evidences these key aspects of the appeal of teaching.

The variability and the challenge.

The chance to make a difference, have a different day every day, and to be able to improve things where I can.

That it wasn't just a 9-5 office job and that there was a chance to work with a variety of different children.

The love of working with young people, the challenges of students understanding a subject which I didn't always find easy and the fact everyday was going to be different. Of course the holidays did cross my mind although not a very big part of it.

The hours were more suited to my current lifestyle, I used to work 80 - 90 hours a week for a very low salary so the 'sensible' hours of teaching seemed very appealing, plus working with children is brilliant I used to be a scout leader.

The end product of helping students improve at maths plus the skill of public speaking (in front of class) which has always appealed to me.

Maths online focus group

The appeal of teaching for non shortage subject trainees was largely similar to that of the shortage candidates, as evidenced below.

What aspects of teaching as a career were most appealing to you?

Practical experiments and being a form tutor.

The thought that I might, somewhere along the line, inspire someone like I was inspired.

Working with my subject every day and sparking an interest in young people to enjoy the subject as much as I already do. My interest was sparked by a particular teacher at school and I hope to be that teacher for students in the future.

Working with children. I have always loved children and helping them understand. It gave me a sense of achievement.

Helping the students understand this amazing world more, especially those deprived children that may never get a chance to actually see all those amazing places.

Mixed Non-Shortage Online Focus Group

However, as set out in the section on 'Shortage as a driver', shortage subject candidates are further incentivised by their awareness of job opportunities likely to be available in their subject, and by the additional funding and support available.

I just thought that the potential for working was quite good. You know, I got the impression that there's a lot of work available, a lot of positions that they're struggling to fill, so I didn't think it would be too difficult to find a placement.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Funding

Bursaries, salaries and scholarships as critical

Funding issues were described by many teaching candidates as being make or break.

If I hadn't've got a bursary for this year and I wasn't being paid, there's no way I could have done that, because obviously I've got a debt from uni anyway from my first degree. Like this year, although I'm not really getting into debt, I'm not gaining anything, but I can just about deal with that. Like, without the funding then I don't think I could have done it. I just don't think I would have been able to fund it.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

This can be particularly the case for career changers, who were most likely to refer to ongoing commitments such as mortgages and families which they could only have met whilst training with a bursary or salary.

That's absolutely crucial actually, the high level bursary.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

It basically made it so I could afford to quit my job and start my career again, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford to.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

One respondent with a 2.1 degree from outside of the UK found he was ineligible for a bursary and was experiencing significant challenges now his training had commenced, having to borrow from third parties to supplement a university hardship grant.

If I could speak to myself a year ago, I would say don't do it unless I have a couple of grand savings.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group)

Without the bursary or salary they received, many respondents say they would not have considered teaching, or they would have postponed their application to another time, or applied for teaching assistant posts instead for example.

I would have spent a bit of time working, earning. I wouldn't have been able to afford it without the bursary. So I would have had to take some years to, sort of, save up the money and go into it later on.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

A trigger to train

As evidenced in the case study set out in Figure 2, hearing about bursaries can be one of the triggers setting shortage subject candidates on their journey, having previously dismissed it as unaffordable or 'too big a move' from an existing, and often successful, career.

This was again evidenced in the maths online focus group, where only one of seven respondents was confident that he would have done the course without the bursary.

...having my own place I needed to ensure I could afford to train without being employed, especially as I haven't graduated long enough to be eligible for the salaried SD route. (School Direct Fee)

Yes. I don't think I could have considered pursuing without the bursary available, as I have no income from elsewhere and am a single mum. (GTTR)

Yes but also the affordability and part time nature of learning means you can work at the same time. (GTTR)

£9000 tuition fees would have put me off otherwise! I don't think I would have applied, which would have been a shame! (School Direct Fee)

The bursary has been a life-saver especially with having my second placement school so far from mine. (School Direct Fee)

Yes, I would not have been able to afford it with out the bursaries. I survived in uni with a full time job (second degree) but I knew that would not be possible when training. (School Direct Fee)

... the bursary helps for certain ...(but) provided the course fees could be covered by a SFE [Student Finance England] loan I would still do the course. (GTTR)

.... the tuition fees was a massive turn off so having a bursary which would cover that made it more possible (School Direct Fee).

Maths online focus group

Even where respondents did not describe the bursary or salary as make or break they described the funding as an incentive which impacted on their decision-making.

The salary is good and definitely encouraged me to do that route rather than go into a PGCE.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

I don't think I'd have been able to afford to live, because you can't really do another job with this course.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

This was less the case in the non-shortage group, where the same financial incentives are not available. The non-shortage online group described receiving a basic bursary alongside tuition fee loans, maintenance loans and grants and a number felt that they would have applied without this. This was in contrast to the views of shortage subject respondents expressed in the interviews and groups.

Did hearing about funding to train play any role in your decision to explore teaching?

No. (Geography, School Direct Fee)

No would have paid out of my own pocket. (Biology, GTTR & School Direct)

Not really, I saw it as a bonus. (English, GTTR)

No because I just saw the bursary as an aid, but the fees did not really affect my desire to apply. However if [the] fees were any higher, that may have affected whether I would have applied. (English, GTTR)

No, it just covers the cost of the course. (English, School Direct Fee)

I probably wouldn't have been able to (apply without it), as I went straight from uni to training and only had a casual job invigilating... I think I would have applied to work as a TA like some have. (Biology, GTTR)

Mixed non shortage subjects online focus group

Scholarships

A small number of the 118 respondents involved in this research reported that they gained a scholarship to train.

Like bursaries, scholarships are reported to enable candidates to take the step into teaching which would not have been possible without funding.

Interviewer summary: Funding was a major reason why he decided to pursue it now - being approached by the Institute of Physics.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

A member of the physics online group had achieved a scholarship after 'googling how to get some extra pennies' and receiving some further information from the Institute of Physics (IOP).

However, scholarships are not widely available and therefore they are not as common a trigger to train as either bursaries, or indeed School Direct salaries. Some see them as too 'restrictive' or were unclear on what a scholarship was, or who offers them. Some respondents reported being invited to interview but finding the distance to the interview, or timing prohibitive.

Interviewer summary: He was aware that he could apply for a scholarship worth £20,000. He passed the test online but was unable to attend the panel interview which required preparation at the same time as revising for the Key Skills test, so he did not pursue it. He now receives a bursary of £9,000.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

Another had been put off by the requirement to make a film as part of her application, which she felt made the scholarship appear more appropriate to students.

Figure 3: Case study – a scholarship opens the door to teacher training

The only reason this career changer moved into teaching was because she managed to get a scholarship of £20,000 from the British Computer Society (BCS), meaning that they pay her fees and she also receives money towards expenses. It was a big decision to make the change, and financially she did not see it as possible previously.

She applied independently, did an online test, and then was invited to give a half hour lesson to a group of students at a school. She then had an interview at the headquarters of the company sponsoring the scholarship.

There were only 50 scholarships available in the country so she saw it as a huge achievement to get it, which boosted her confidence and motivation to teach.

Awareness of the funding source

Awareness of the funding being government-funded appeared to be a little more in evidence for School Direct bursaries and salaries than for scholarships.

Where they received a School Direct bursary or salary, some described the salary as simply being paid by the school but more were aware that this money was funded by the government.

To me, it comes directly from the school, but I assume it's government based.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

Among the small number in the sample who received a scholarship, most described the funding as coming from the awarding body, although there was some evidence of awareness of the original source.

Yes, scholarship comes to Institute of Physics but the original source comes from the DFE.

Physics with Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The FSM-based uplift

Online focus group participants were asked the following poll-question: Were you aware that if you are doing School Direct training in a school with more than 35% of Pupils on Free School Meals (FSM), you get a 25% uplift on your School Direct bursary?

Of the 28 participants overall, 17 were aware of the FSM-based uplift to a School Direct bursary (approximately 6 in 10). Depth interviews were not assessed quantitatively but, where asked, levels of awareness appeared to be similarly divided.

Across the sample, testimonies suggest that awareness of this uplift does not make an impact on which route or which schools candidates apply to (or would have applied to, with hindsight). This was largely because location is such an important factor in choice of school, in addition to the commonplace rush at application stage, leaving candidates feeling that they did not have sufficient time to spend investigating all of the nuanced route options and their varying financial incentives.

I've read about that and I think that I realised that that wasn't going to be the schools around where I am. I'm fairly sure that you'd know if you lived in an area where it's 35% or more, I think that's saying inner-city and schools around council estates.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

I told you I started late, so I didn't find it on the website, and... I didn't look into whether they had free school meals or not, and I didn't know if there was a criteria, because it was late.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

The following extract from the physics focus group was fairly typical of the emphasis on location and the perception that being aware of the FSM-based uplift would not have impacted on the route selected.

Did this have an impact on your application or the course/school or course provider you chose? In what way?

No. I chose my provider by location, and there are no schools with that profile in my area. (School Direct Fee)

No it didn't have an impact, I chose my school by location. (School Direct Fee)

I was already working for the school I applied to so would have continued there even if unsuccessful... my school was just under the percentage. (School Direct Salaried)

Those on GTTR/ PGCE - would it have made Schools Direct more appealing if you knew about the uplift in bursary?

No. (GTTR)

Not really. (GTTR)

Physics online focus group

Where respondents looked at criteria outside of location when selecting their School Direct placement, they tended to look for schools that were seen as higher-performing and with lower behaviour issues, wanting to ‘*learn from the best*’ while not being overwhelmed by having to deal with bad behaviour from the start. Indeed, one respondent described her association of free school meals with ‘difficulties’ and considered therefore that the uplift would not have been enough to incentivise her. This respondent considered the uplift to be a cause of unnecessary complexity in decision-making on routes into training.

I associated free school meals with difficulties. I think in our area, yes, I think around Nottingham the schools that offer school training are normally quite well off schools and they don't really have-, I'm not sure it really applies here. You see, that's a typical thing that makes it very complex.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another considered that the additional funding would not have altered her decision-making but in this case it was because she was happy to leave the decision on her placement school to the lead school.

I don't think it would have mattered. At the end of the day my lead school picked my placement. I could have asked to do that one if I'd have wanted them but it would have been up to them if they'd put me in there or not.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

There was also a small amount of feedback which suggested that some trainees were in schools meeting the FSM-uplift criteria but were either not aware of the funding, or were aware but had not received it.

Interviewer summary: Not aware of this - although thinks she would be eligible.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Is aware of this, although found out about it after she had applied to such a school. Noted she has not had this funding yet and has heard rumours the government is not keen on paying this out.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Funding challenges and requests

As covered later in this report in ‘What was missing?’, candidates would welcome more tailored advice on the best routes into teaching for them from a financial point of view. They would value the opportunity to speak to someone with expertise on the funding

options available who will listen to their particular circumstances e.g. their location, access to finance, financial commitments, degree class and so on.

Not all were aware of or had considered trying to access one-to-one advice on this via the teaching line, or had been able to access recruitment advisors.

Interviewer summary: Found it quite difficult to find out which bursaries to apply for - would have helped to have more tailored advice on funding.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Respondents also emphasised the importance of hearing about funding as early as possible in the process, to guide their decision-making. The following candidate reported that he received a salary for Schools Direct salaried training at around £15,900. He had not applied via the fee-paying route due to risk of not getting it but would have liked information on his eligibility for a bursary at the start of the process so that he could have applied if eligible.

I would have qualified for a bursary, at least on paper, because of the EFL, and I had the degree available if needed. However, if you're juggling with your future, you don't want to apply, go through the motions, get offered the post and then potentially find out that you wouldn't get a bursary. Then you're in trouble, so I didn't want to take that risk... You need to know up front that you will definitely get the bursary then go ahead and apply, rather than apply first and then be told whether you've got a bursary or not.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Complaints about the level of funding received were less common than complaints of it being complex or confusing. However, a minority were not content that the level of funding they received was diminished by them not achieving a 2:1. One respondent was frustrated that they had just missed out on a 2:1.

I'm entitled to get a bursary, a government bursary. I just missed out on a 2:1, which is really annoying because it drops my bursary from £15,000 down to £12,000, which is a bit frustrating. It was literally by less than half a percent as well that I missed out by.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another felt that the university at which you achieved your degree should be taken into account.

I couldn't have done it without it (the bursary), but I don't understand how they give different amounts depending upon what result you got at university. I went to Warwick Uni and got 2.2 and then somebody went to a rubbishy uni and got 2.1 and they are getting three grand more than me a year. I just think that's completely wrong.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Others similarly stated that NCTL should take account of wider factors when deciding on the funding level appropriate to a particular candidate such as experience as a professional teacher in native countries, and further qualifications.

Do you have anything else to add on the journey into teacher training that we have not covered today but that you think it may be useful for decision-makers to know about at NCTL/DfE?

To possibly take into consideration more the experience of the applicant rather than just their degree level to decide on who is worthy of a bursary.

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

Among the small number of design and technology trainees interviewed there was more evidence of dissatisfaction with the level of funding received, including reports that 'no extra finance' had been made available to them.

It's the number one issue that bothers everyone on course... extra financial support, yes. I think this is the lowest turnout for people applying to design and technology in years... because it's a big jump if you're doing a PGCE, it's physically impossible to have a part-time job and trying a course at the same time. You're left with hardly any money, and yes, it's getting to a really bad situation where the only people who can go down that route are basically people who have just left university, or left uni a couple of years ago and still live at home.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Location

While the location of schools and providers was not treated within the funding section in interviews, it is mentioned here in this report to reflect the importance of location to the cost of training for candidates. At present fuel costs are seen as extremely high, and some candidates described how they made their application decisions based largely on weighing up both travel and accommodation costs according to where their placements would be based.

(The bursary) helps massively, particularly as my placement school is 50 miles driving a day, there and back, so costs a lot in petrol. I would still have applied without it, but would've been more picky in terms of places.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

Another respondent had deferred her application by a year to obtain a School Direct training place closer to her home, while one had dropped out of training in her first term due in large part to the distance between the school (local) and the provider (more than an hour away).

The vast majority of candidates mentioned location when asked to explain why they picked the School Direct schools they did.

(Interviewer summary): Geographical location - the 5 schools he chose were within a reasonable commute of his home - the rest were long commute.

Computer science, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

So you have to apply to three schools and I'd been offered interviews, I was offered a job at the first school but I had to turn that down due to location reasons. So I took a job at another one.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

(What was missing?) Making it easier to find out the location of the schools in terms of inner London/outer London.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Challenges and barriers before application

Interviewers probed the concerns experienced by candidates and the sources via which they overcame these concerns, which included NCTL channels of support.

Concerns experienced

Concerns felt by respondents in the early stages of their journey (i.e. before application) were fairly wide-ranging but a number were mentioned on multiple occasions. These included financial concerns, concerns about one's suitability for teaching as a career, (including behaviour management), and concerns in relation to meeting the requirements and needs of the training.

Some considered they were 'taking a gamble' (including financial) on something that they may find they 'couldn't do'.

Yes, I was fearful that I couldn't do it and it was a lot of money that I would be wasting if I couldn't do it. But, I had that before I started uni, I had that before I started college. It's a new thing. I've had to move back home because financially I can't afford to live away, just lots of stuff that's changed but it's all worked out.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Concerns about the starting salary, job prospects and progression potential were also mentioned alongside those mentioned above.

Interviewer summary: Low starting salary is a massive concern, the major worry, but he hopes his career will progress quickly. He has been concerned about behaviour, but school experience days have been very useful in cementing his decision.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Another thing is the whole progression routes as well. It wasn't clear to me how I would do that and if it was actually possible in reality.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

The physics and maths focus group extracts below showcase a number of typical concerns.

Would I be able to get a job afterwards or be any good at it? This is a career change for me so could not afford to fail.

I was quite worried about meeting the profile as my degree wasn't as similar to what I am teaching as some. in the past the system seemed blind to experience or passion about teaching and I have been unsuccessful on the old PGCE route.

Will I be any good at it, and a bit of Behaviour Management worries.

Teaching has a reputation for having a hefty workload. I guess that was in the back of my mind.

I was worried if I could fit in a different cultural context from where I come from.

Physics online focus group

Was merely just a lack of confidence in myself at the beginning.

Whether I would actually be able to do it!

Not really, I've had some very challenging roles in my previous careers.

Job satisfaction - supporting young people, challenging them, helping them to understand, break throughs, Developing young peoples' skills in ways in which I don't think I was supported when I was at school - confidence, social/employability skills, developing knowledge & ability to apply it. Using my planning/preparation skills.

Running out of money to complete the course.

The only initial thing that scared me was how would I deal with behaviour incidents, but it's definitely a lot easier than anticipated!

Confidence was certainly something I was worried about. Also the job satisfaction, hearing from a few people of how stressful the job is and that the workload is endless.

The challenges of managing classes & behaviour - but this was also my drive, to learn how to do this well.

Maths Online Focus Group

Concerns held in the non-shortage group were not dissimilar.

League tables and expectant progress. Teacher performance related pay..

The amount of work stress involved in PGCE year, if I would be able to cope.

Friends of friends had dropped out of the course because they found it too hard. That worried me.

The difficult nature of the course.

Just whether or not I would be able to handle the work load and actually manage a classroom having known people in the past who struggled.

The application process itself was quite lengthy and intimidating. The transforming English NC [national curriculum], finding somewhere to live that would make getting to placements easy and other logistical stuff.

Initially I was concerned about behavioural problems in schools, but after first hand experience I can see that it is not as traumatic as it was made out to be. I was also told that the PGCE course is very intensive, so I am preparing for the challenge!

Mixed non shortage online focus group

Those whose job roles had not involved a teaching element and those without school experience may need more reassurances that teaching will suit them and their skills and aptitudes.

A small number of candidates saw their age as a concern. One, just leaving university wondered if he would be respected and treated like an adult by his school direct colleagues, while two career changers at ages 35 and 48 wondered if they were 'too old'. For these, reassurance from an official source was important.

I was asking (the teaching line) about, you know, what you need, because I'm 48, if my age was okay. They said, 'Yes, there are older people than you doing it.' It was just... what formalities you need to do and that it was feasible that I could do it, yes.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The only thing-, the only two things that I can think of were, I was worried about going into teaching because of my age. I turn 35 this year. Obviously there's that, so I was worried, you know, is that going to be an issue, but I was assured that it wouldn't be, and the way that Schools Direct is tailored, it's also tailored to, you know, fit those people who are coming out of an industry. It's more preferential, if you're coming out of an industry, to go through the Schools Direct route, because obviously, you've got that background knowledge, you've got that subject knowledge.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

This concern was not widely-held however, and, as set out at the start of this report, having one's own children was a motivation for some to begin considering teaching. Indeed, reaching a certain life-stage can give a candidate confidence and help them overcome earlier concerns of 'not being good enough'.

It's only recently, when I've had a career, I've got a family, I'm a responsible adult, as it were, which I wasn't at the age of twenty, that I'm thinking I have certain skills that I can use to good effect and get satisfaction out of it myself.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Behaviour management

Concerns about how to manage behaviour were commonly felt in the pre-application stage of the journey to teaching. Perhaps most common were concerns on whole-class management.

Interviewer summary: Behaviour management was the main concern and consequently a factor in choosing a school. Challenge of managing behaviour of 20-30 children.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

Interviewer summary: Main concern about teaching initially was behaviour management, based on his own school experiences as a pupil. In particular concerned about managing from a whole class perspective. Did feel more confident about this after undertaking a school placement.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Other significant causes of concern were extreme bad behaviour situations such as violence, and pupils 'telling tales'.

You hear the odd story of kids throwing chairs and fighting. I think one of the ones-, you know you don't want to get accused of doing anything, like sexual harassment. One lad, whenever he was alone with a female member of staff, would take his trousers off. Things like that, you'd just be thinking, 'Oh my god.'

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Worries that children can be volatile and tell tales, and is paranoid about where he is in the classroom and ensures he's not alone - very conscious as he doesn't want to be in a position where a child tells lies about him.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Respondents now living in the UK but originally from another country sometimes had additional concerns, considering that their language or background might make behaviour management more difficult.

That students wouldn't be very receptive to me because I am from a foreign country.

Physics (with maths), GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Getting over concerns

Some respondents considered that they got over their concerns about behaviour management alone, or 'put them to one side' before tackling them at the training stage. The first placement was then cited as the 'experience' that helped them decide whether their earlier fears had been justified, and develop their skills to overcome issues.

Where candidates had overcome their concerns before they began their training, experience in a school was most likely to be mentioned as the way they did this. Experience in a school was said to help confirm whether candidates were suited to teaching, increase confidence and provide skills in behaviour management.

BM [behaviour management] is something I worried about but I follow the BM system is very helpful. Often getting a few members of the class on your side is very helpful.

Mixed non shortage online focus group

Working as a TA [teaching assistant] also helped me to better understand B4L [Behaviour for Learning] systems in place and understand where some of the problems I encountered as a student were coming from.

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

As detailed in the section on school experience, there were calls from some candidates for more help in getting work experience in a school before training.

Everyone said that I needed to get experience. I spoke to a government advisor and she talked me through the whole thing. I had no experience working in a school and she said that was going to be my hurdle. She said, my advice would be to contact all the schools in your local area and see if you can visit. I contacted every school in my area and half of them never replied and the other half said unless you are on a training course, we won't let you in. But I couldn't apply to the training course without the experience, so I couldn't get one without the other. How is anyone meant to get into teacher training?

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: Was unable to get an observation day through the [T]eaching [A]gency because she did not have an honours degree.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Experience in a school of some kind before ITT was said to develop behaviour management techniques and confidence in general.

A few of you have mentioned confidence there, was there anything that helped you to overcome those concerns?

School experience before applying - going and experiencing/seeing how it is in reality.

Maths online focus group

Beyond school experience, wider work to reassure candidates is also likely to be useful. The candidate quoted below felt that his experience teaching abroad would help him with behaviour management but he wished he had been convinced at an earlier stage that 'nobody is really born to be a teacher'.

I went abroad from here to teach and in fact I found that it was not as difficult as I thought it would be, and that I felt pretty good with class management and children... (Would have been useful) if somebody convinced me that... you learn this on the job and on the training anyway, and nobody really is born to be a teacher. You just have to practice and train.

Physics, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Another felt that there should be more focus on reassuring and informing candidates about behaviour management in communications before application. He suggested 'open day' events focusing specifically on issues like behaviour management.

There were certain aspects which I struggled with, and obviously I wouldn't expect the government to put information out that was, kind of, negative, but I did find that it would have helped if I understood a bit more the negative aspects. I mean the main one, I think, would be behaviour management... Perhaps if there were more open days or anything like that particularly to deal with issues like that.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Financial concerns

As detailed elsewhere in this report, financial concerns ('Can I afford it?') were commonly mentioned as being present before application.

Interviewer summary: Pay is a big concern because he is taking a pay cut from £30,000 to £15,000 to train as a teacher.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Candidates overcame concerns relating to finance by finding out more on salaries, bursaries and scholarships where eligible. NCTL channels provided information and reassurance. Candidates appeared particularly likely to pick up the phone for reassurance on this aspect⁹.

Interviewer summary: Finding out about the fees and bursary through the telephone support made her more certain she could afford to make the change in careers.

Chemistry, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

⁹ See section on Engagement and Communications for more on the Teaching Line. In general candidates were satisfied but a minority sought more tailored and bespoke advice e.g. on their eligibility for funding.

The real barrier at the beginning was money, 'How can I survive here without working?'... Then I found about the bursaries and the student loans, I made some phone calls and I found very supportive people that gave me all the information I needed.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

The website, followed up with advice at an event, had helped remove concerns for the following candidate in respect of teaching salaries.

(Re. Expected salary) I saw that on the Teaching Agency website and I was able to ask at the roadshow. I asked a teacher about that and they said, 'Yes, you go up a band every year for six years'.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Other contact points such as the university and student loans company had also provided information and guidance.

The... monetary aspect at the very beginning, obviously I've got a family to support, but my university and my school and UCAS and the student loans company, were very helpful in directing me to what I could actually apply for, and what I would actually receive, and because I have come out of industry, I do get an enhanced bursary. So I get a little bit more than the normal student, who has come straight out of a graduate degree, who is a fresh graduate going into a scheme like Schools Direct, or a PGCE programme.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

See also sections in this report on funding and registration and engagement.

Meeting the requirements and demands of training

The range of routes into teacher training removed barriers for some. For example a small number of candidates who had not been able to meet the criteria to undertake a PGCE or, and who had been unsuccessful via this route found that they had subsequently been successful in gaining a School Direct place.

That didn't work, and then I'd given up, effectively, and then someone spoke about, 'What about trying School Direct?' It worked.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

However, as detailed elsewhere in this report, some felt that the range of routes added complexity and caused them concerns at the early stages of exploring teaching. This perception should be interpreted in the context of the timing of the research, with School Direct routes only in their first full year. At that time, some considered that there was not enough information on routes into training to help them understand the exact requirements and structure of the different courses. This includes for example the split between school- and university-training.

I wasn't sure what was required and I was also keen to understand how the balance between the actual physical teaching and the actual academic side of things as well. That's still not clear in my head.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

A small number also mentioned subject knowledge requirements as a concern. The earlier candidates access information on requirements and opportunities for enhancement the better.

Interviewer summary: During the process of applying she did have second thoughts in terms of thinking is it right for her and whether she had enough subject knowledge to be able to do it and concerns over having to present in front of everyone on a daily basis... On training you have to use subject knowledge and present daily - having done it so much helped her overcome it.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Where support on this side is received early in the process this helps motivate and encourage candidates through their journey.

Interviewer summary: He went to a Teaching Agency day which then allowed him to spend a few days on a subject knowledge enhancement course which helped set his mind at rest, and also arranged to spend a couple of weeks at a local school which made him feel he could do it.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Managing the time commitment of the course was a particular concern for candidates with young families. One candidate who had withdrawn her application considered that NCTL could usefully provide information targeted at people with families to inform them about what is available to support them with their childcare responsibilities during training. She would also have been encouraged by case studies e.g. online, providing examples of how mothers with young children successfully tackle a career in teaching.

NCTL support in getting candidates over their concerns

Candidates ranged from some who used no formal support to those who used multiple channels.

As mentioned in respect of behaviour management, some put their concerns to one side and made their application regardless (not needing NCTL support to continue their journey).

It was what I wanted to do, I knew that if I wanted to be a teacher I'd just have to suck it up and do it!

It was something that I wanted to do and a career that I want to pursue so as far as I was concerned it was just something that unfortunately came with the PGCE route as there were no schools direct placements in my area for the subject.

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

Many candidates used friends and family for reassurances and did not approach government sources for advice or support at that stage.

I was already in a school setting, and I was able to speak to teachers, you know, through my mobile phone, and e-mail, they were always there on hand if I had a question.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

This was easier where for those with teachers or teacher trainees in their social networks.

I've got a couple of friends that are teachers, who are always happy to help out, I had a few conversations with them about what the local schools were like and it put my mind at ease.

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

But it was common to use a combination of formal and informal sources, and NCTL support was reported to be instrumental in many cases, as set out in more detail in the section on Engagement and Communications. In the case of the analytical chemist quoted below for example, family provided reassurances but an informal conversation with a local School Direct representative was fundamental in helping reduce his insecurities about teaching.

It's always been one of those things that I thought I'd never be any good at, but people always said you'd be a good teacher. Last year I was unfortunately made redundant, at the beginning of June, and I'd been unhappy in my previous job anyway, and I felt like a change of career might be prudent. So when I was made redundant, I had a look around for other jobs, but I always had in the back of my mind, about teaching. Then a friend of my wife's, who is a teacher at a local school, suggested I maybe get in contact with the partner school for the Schools Direct group... I got in contact with them, had an interview, well, a chat with their guys and it, sort of, made it more concrete in my mind that this was something that I should do. So, yes, after that, I went through the application process... and got accepted. You know, it's one of those things, well, am I going to be any good?... it was a bit of a gamble, and it took a lot of pushing from my wife, and a lot of reassurance from my wife, that this was probably a good thing to do. It was mainly overcoming my own insecurities about it, you know.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The following respondent similarly had teaching at the back of his mind for a number of years, his motivation outweighed by considerations that he would 'not be good enough'. For this respondent it was observation at a school and encouraging conversations with school leaders, backed up by informative websites, which were the key to overcoming concerns.

Once I'd spoken to this chap at [academy name], who's the HR manager... I spoke to him briefly on the phone, and then he invited me to come down and spend a couple of weeks just spending time at [the school], observing lessons, and he told me about the Schools Direct route, and he suggested I have a look at the Department of Education website, about Schools Direct. So... I spent some time looking through the website, seeing what was available and seeing whether it was feasible for me to do that. The school were very, very instrumental in me applying for that Schools Direct route. They were more than helpful in providing information about the course, and in informing me what was required of me to get on the course, so all my literacy and numeracy skills tests.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Therefore, where used, NCTL resources can be a fundamental part of the mix in eliminating concerns and encouraging people into teaching. More on NCTL resources and their impact can be found in the section on Engagement and Communications. More on NCTL support in understanding different routes into teaching can be found in the section on route selection 'Support in Decision-making/Managing the Complexity.'

Feedback suggests that candidates vary greatly in how they deal with their concerns. At one extreme, some take a passive approach to overcoming their concerns or indeed apply without ever tackling them (such as the 'suck it up and do it' candidate quoted at the start of this section), while others are extremely cautious and conduct thorough research before they take the next step. The candidate in the case study in Figure 4 below showcases the most proactive point on the scale, where candidates utilise numerous channels of support to make sure that teaching and the routes into it are right for them and the opportunity for financial support is maximised.

Figure 4: Case study – early concerns tackled via a range of advice channels

One candidate experienced a number of concerns during her journey to teacher training, which she tackled in different ways.

Behaviour management: *"I did start reading books about behaviour management and about the classroom. I realised that there are a lot of things you can do. It's all about gaining the interest of your class and if they're on task and they're interested in what you're teaching and you make it sound good or give them good activities to do, then they will work. Basically, behaviour problems appear when they're bored or they just don't get something you're teaching. It's all about pacing it at the right level and just bringing out the best in them really."*

Financial concerns: The Premier Plus recruitment advisors sent her information showing all the different support available; there was also information online and when she applied to GTTR there was information on the university website about what financial help was available.

Career development: She looked on the DfE website at salaries and progression opportunities.

Subject knowledge: The BCS sent her an audit and she went into a school and saw the curriculum, which reassured her that she had the appropriate knowledge.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Schools and school experience

As detailed elsewhere in this report, experience in a school is an important way that candidates can address their concerns about teaching, in particular behaviour management. Where undertaken, some had organised this themselves, others via NCTL.

Interviewer summary: He did a placement in a school, saw how the teachers dealt with (bad behaviour) situations. That time, and experience generally helps with this.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Interviewer summary: The low starting salary is a massive concern, the major worry, but he hopes his career will progress quickly. He has also been concerned about behaviour, but school experience days have been very useful in cementing his decision.

Science/Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A)

Others had gained the same reassurances from working in schools as assistants for example.

Interviewer summary: Had some concerns initially about management of groups, now feels 'positive' that he has strategies to use for behaviour management, after spending time working in schools (as a Teaching Assistant in primary schools, which included attending training days for teaching staff).

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

As well as removing potential trainees' concerns, schools play an important role in inspiring and encouraging potential teaching candidates. Schools that do not engage, or provide a negative/unsupportive experience to candidates, can be a significant hurdle for teaching candidates.

They said no which surprised me, I thought they're desperate for maths people, I thought I've got a 2:1 in maths, you know, I'm a qualified accountant, I've got my own children, live locally, they're probably going to come to your school. I was happy to fit around them if they just wanted me just once or if it was a regular thing, just whatever, I would have been happy. They very bluntly said, 'No, we're not a junior school, we don't have parent helpers and we don't like to have adults that aren't teachers in the school.'

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Did anything make you consider dropping out at this stage?

.....: Schools said you had to be recommended in order to observe at the school... Some places charge students to come and observe! why??

Maths online focus group

Opportunities to learn from teachers and past candidates

As detailed elsewhere in this report, many candidates value case studies or being able to hear from or connect to someone else who has gone through teacher training and can give the benefit of their experience. As mentioned in the focus group extract below, some universities offer students the opportunity to link up with past PGCE students. This was not mentioned as something available to those interested in School Direct (most likely due to this being its first full cohort) but it is likely that this approach would be welcomed.

Thinking about the concerns you've spoken about in general (so not just in relation to pupil behaviour) now, what if anything has helped you to overcome those concerns or worries?

Speaking to former PGCE students and teachers and observing to gain experience in schools.

School experience prior to applying. Fact that there is lots of research and information available from those that know what they are doing.

Any concerns I've had have been alleviated by the knowledge that I have a good support network in the form of my training provider as well as other PGCE students based in my school.

... Also same as - speaking to former PGCE students

Maths online focus group

Route selection

Please note that for the purposes of this research, candidates were divided into three categories: Those who applied for teacher training via GTTR (i.e. university- or provider-led training); those who applied for teacher training via School Direct (fee paying or salaried), and those who applied for teacher training via both of these routes. The type of School Direct route (fee-paying or salaried) was also recorded where known. Commentary and attributions of quotations throughout this report reflect these three categories, while noting that the language used to describe these routes has since changed.

It is important to note that in some cases respondents were not clear on the routes they had used to apply to training, in particular which School Direct route they had applied to (which sometimes changed from what they had originally stated, during the interview, after further probing by the interviewer). This emphasises the need for clarity and consistency in how routes are defined and labelled in the sector going forwards.

Choices

More than two-thirds of the sample overall had applied to a School Direct route, as either their only route, or in combination with GTTR. Among School Direct applicants, similar numbers had applied via the fee paying and salaried routes, with a small minority who had applied to both routes. SCITT and Teach First applicants were not targeted as part of the research, and these routes were not explored but one or two had also applied through these at some stage.

In general, respondents tended to report that the number of ways that you could access teacher training was more than they had anticipated.

I didn't realise how many different ways you could get into it. I just thought PGCE or whatever. So that was interesting to see that there were so many different options, different ways of doing it.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

As detailed in the section of this report on advertising, hearing about the range of options and funding available was a trigger for some to start their journey to teacher training, where they had not found the traditional PGCE route appealing.

Interviewer summary: Online banner advertising and billboard advertising in London about the different routes and how to find more information made him consider other options outside the PGCE/GTTR route.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

But the number of routes-in appears to be considered as both a blessing and a curse, adding more choice but also adding complexity to decision-making. In particular the new School Direct routes were described as 'opening doors' to teacher training for some who felt that they would not otherwise have accessed training. However, on the downside, the range of options and range of funding levels were described as confusing. One candidate considered application so complex that she remarked 'You need a GCSE in applying!' The respondent quoted below describes a similar sense of overwhelm at the range of options.

What was confusing about that whole process was that there were so many different bodies involved in it, there were literally hundreds and hundreds of different routes into teaching and it was a little bit-, I did start looking at what was the best route into it because it wasn't clear cut in terms of you could do PGCEs, Teach First, School Direct, obviously the old GTP [graduate teacher programme] at the time and all sorts of various other combinations were around, so it was still a bit confusing at the time to say 'well, have I chosen the right route?'

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Reasons for making multiple applications

Many of the respondents who had applied to both School Direct and GTTR described their motivation as being to maximise their chances and give themselves the ability to pick and choose if successful in more than one application.

School Direct was a different option that I considered and I wanted to give myself the best chance of getting on to a course, I wanted to cover as many bases as possible.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

The following candidate made several applications to ensure she secured the most favourable one for her in terms of funding and location in particular.

Interviewer summary: Applied for SD salaried route because she wasn't sure how she would fund it, so at least there would be some money coming in. When she got the BCS scholarship she realised she did not need a salaried job and could have gone either way, so applied for both, but decided to go with the SD route in the end because 'it's very similar to the university way but you know which school you'll be at whereas with PGCE the university decides'. For her, it was important to know that she could commute and pick up the children - it had to work around her. She had heard some stories of people getting placements in the other side of London so it was important to know which school she would be at.

Computer Science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another had applied to GTTR but then, having deferred to do her SKE, heard about School Direct and swapped on the basis of this suiting her needs better, rejecting her PGCE place.

Some respondents favoured a School Direct route, but doubts that sufficient School Direct places would be available in their area (see 'Selecting GTTR' below) prompted them to apply to GTTR as a 'back up' option, as in the case quoted below.

Well School Direct was my first choice, essentially. If I had been offered a place I would have taken School Direct but because PGCE is the more traditional teacher training route and from what I could gather there weren't going to be that many School Direct places, I applied for PGCE on the basis that there were probably more places so if I didn't get a School Direct place, I'd probably still get a PGCE place.

Physics with maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The newness of School Direct and views that the system may be experiencing teething troubles also prompted some to apply to GTTR as potentially the 'more secure' option.

Interviewer summary: Was initially a bit unsure about SD - first year it had been run/seemed disorganised. So applied to GTTR also, even though thought SD would be more appropriate route for his situation.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

One had applied to School Direct Salaried as her first choice but been unsuccessful. However, feedback on this, and her lesson, made her better prepared for application to the fee paying route, in which she was successful.

Multiple applications can sometimes be motivated by lack of awareness/clarity on the detail of the different routes. Some candidates applied to several routes because they were unsure exactly what each course entailed but did not have the time to explore the routes fully before deadlines. The following candidate had found the routes confusing but considered the application process as the best way to inform herself.

I'd rather apply for them all and then weigh up which one was better after having an interview, and after being able to ask questions at the interview.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

One non-trainee had applied to both 'to maximise my opportunity for success' but had withdrawn from both after considering that neither could be managed alongside other commitments. Working as a teaching assistant and private tutor, she also had three young children and a husband working long hours. She eventually discounted even School Direct on the basis of the time required to train.

It was the commitment to the teaching as a job, but also I felt that the School Direct route wasn't for me because it required me to stay in the evenings. I think, two days a week to receive some mentoring and some training... I felt that I couldn't do it at the time.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

In time, as the new routes into teacher training become more established, it is likely that awareness will grow, and multiple applications will be more likely to be driven by the motivation to maximise opportunity and less by lack of understanding of what each training route entails.

Reasons for selecting School Direct or GTTR

Selecting School Direct

Key reasons for applying to School Direct over GTTR include:

- **Financial reasons/not being able to afford the PGCE**

There were mentions of greater affordability of School Direct routes (over university-led) by School Direct candidates, in particular SD Salaried but also those on the fee-paying route (potentially relating to wider costs such as travelling expenses). The following candidate set out how he was able to train under the School Direct Salaried route without needing to take out a loan or add to his mortgage.

Equally, it's a salaried route in, whereas PGCE, even though I would have been eligible for a bursary, I would have got a £12,000 bursary, closely followed by a £9,000 tuition fee bill, so it's £3,000 to last for a year... It meant that I didn't have to take out a huge loan or remortgage the house to live for a year.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

SD salaried also brought benefits in terms of giving someone employed status, which helped them to make mortgage applications for example.

I needed to secure a mortgage, I wanted to be employed.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

Decisions appear not always to be based on accurate information. One respondent, on School Direct fee-paying training, had discounted the GTTR route on account of considering that this would not offer the same level of funding, but had later understood this not to be the case. In retrospect, while he found the idea of training in a school appealing, he considered that the university-led route may have been the less 'overwhelming' of the two options for himself.

I thought I wouldn't get the money doing PGCE, but actually I would have, so... I think that would have been better because it was-, I was attracted by being in the school. I really wanted that. If I had known, if I had maybe had more time to ask for the differences-, it was a bit too much for me at the beginning... I don't know, maybe, I don't know-, I wish someone would have told me to do the PGCE, but I don't know if someone would have told me.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

- **Preferring to learn on the job/spend as much time as possible learning in the classroom**

As well as the financial benefits it was common for School Direct applicants to emphasise their keenness to train in-school. They described the school environment as being where you learn best and saw schools as best-placed to provide the most support.

I think you could be learning at university being taught how to teach, but I thought I was going to get an awful lot more experience, and lot more support and advice from a school if they were involved in it as well and I thought that was quite important.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Did not pursue other routes as knew what he wanted - to learn in a school environment and earn a salary at the same time.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

In some cases the preference for SD over GTTR was so strong that, if unsuccessful, candidates were prepared to wait to the next year. One had changed to a different subject (maths to physics) to secure a School Direct place, describing himself as 'a firm believer in learning on the job'. (Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A)

Some had already spent many years in academia, or for other reasons had no desire to return to university full-time.

I wanted to be at work essentially. I'd spent seven years being a student and I didn't want to spend another year going backwards and forwards to university.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Well I've already done a degree, spent a few years in university so I didn't know if I wanted to do that again, especially when you're older and you feel like you're surrounded by lots of young people. Also I thought, I don't know, something tells me that you would learn much quicker and get more experience of the reality of it when you train within a school.

Design & Technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

More aspects of the appeal of School Direct are covered later in this report (see 'School Direct – appeal').

- **Retaining control over school choice and location**

Needing to study 'in my local area' was a key reason for undertaking training via a School Direct route. Some respondents said that a PGCE was not available to them, in other words that they would not be willing to relocate to another area to study at a university.

No, I couldn't even do a PGCE around my area, because they don't offer it at the university.

Design & technology, School Direct, Student, Group A

For many it was essential that they knew in advance what location(s) they would be training at for reasons such as having a young family. One respondent wanted a job that he could cycle to, and several were reliant on public transport. Even where people lived near to a university, it was sometimes seen that the PGCE would bring too much uncertainty in terms of placement locations.

I knew that if I picked the Schools Direct way, all the schools are, sort of, partnered so I knew that I would be put in one that was a local school for my placements whereas with PGCE and that sort of thing they can put you in any radius. It's a twenty mile radius from your house and I didn't want to be travelling, sort of, forty minutes, forty five minutes for my placement everyday because I was without a car when I applied.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Being able to pick your school was seen as a significant benefit of School Direct by many. In addition to location for example, respondents described wanting to train in 'good schools', schools where behaviour issues would not be too challenging, and schools that would provide a positive environment for a trainee (see section on 'Selection of School and provider' for more on this, including the role of Ofsted in perceptions).

I could decide which school. It's completely up to me which schools I picked. I think there was about five or six that were nearest to me, and what I did then was phone round and get an idea of what the school is like, what the people were like. The school that I am actually now with, I put a little smiley face next to that school because they were just so lovely on the phone!

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

- **Not being aware of GTTR or not knowing as much about GTTR as School Direct**

A minority of applicants to School Direct appeared to know little about GTTR. This tended to be the case when a candidate had been prompted to train with School Direct via a school they worked in (or had contacted for experience), a colleague or a friend.

Interviewer summary: Applied via SD only because a friend suggested/recommended it.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

For one respondent, the SD placement had come as part of a job with a school and was not something he had intended to apply for in advance.

I applied for a job at a school and was offered an unqualified teacher role. Then they revised that and said that they wanted to put me onto a School Direct placement. So I was a very late applicant, around 4th or 5th July. So I did complete an application form for a School Direct placement, but I didn't actually have an interview for it because I had an interview for the unqualified teacher role.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

In other cases, respondents knew about GTTR but felt it made sense to go via the SD route if the school was prompting this, or they were already working in that school for example.

I was already employed by that school previously. So I thought that was just a natural progression to do my training through them.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

- **Reasons relating to the timing of applications, availability and the application process**

For the following candidate, decision-making on funding had taken him some time which then led to him perceiving that he was too late for application for GTTR when he came to apply in June/July 2013, but still within the deadline for School Direct.

I was too late to apply for it. I applied really late for the course. I was deliberating because my year that I went to university it was only £3,000 a year so I paid £9,000 for the three years whereas this is £9,000 for one year. I was really deliberating about it and whether to do it or not and then it ended up being too late to apply for the PGCE route.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

For another candidate the SD application process appeared simpler than GTTR, in addition to the benefit being local. He thought it would be an easier option than going through a UCAS-type system.

When I looked into [GTTR], it was like, 'You've got to do this, that, blah, blah, blah,' and I was just like, 'You are joking aren't you?' With School Direct, it was just like, right, you just need to put that spiel on the website, about why you want to be a teacher and they will contact you and that was it.

Maths, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another respondent found it too challenging to find part-time PGCE courses, which prompted her application to School Direct (which unfortunately she withdrew from mid-course).

It's all just a bit confusing because obviously the Schools Direct was very new, and then to find out about doing the PGCSE (sic) route which some of my friends had retrained on, you had to go to individual universities. I do at the time remember thinking of-, even thinking trying to look part time for something, but it was quite hard, you almost had to go into each university to see if they even did a part time. They seemed to be very few and far between... I think with the add on of having my own children, a bit of the way I thought I would have been better off just doing a PGCE.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

- **Other: A job at the end of training**

Significantly less mentioned but nevertheless worth noting was the consideration that School Direct training brought an 'offer of a job at the end' (Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A).

Some resentment was expressed in the online group with physics trainees, that they had initially understood this to be a guarantee of School Direct, but had later understood this not to be the case.

What information, if any, did you feel was missing?

...

I think clarity on whether the SD route would guarantee a job. I was of the opinion, as were many of the other SD people at my school, that a job was pretty safe. However, the school told us it was not.

I just felt it wasn't clear in some areas such as how to qualify for the salaried route etc.

I found the help I had from the person and the website sufficient .

I had the same as (respondent in purple) - the big sell of School Direct was that there would be a job at the end of it, but the school I was in said that there was no guarantee, and as it turns out there isn't an opening for me to teach there come September.

Physics online focus group

Selecting GTTR

Key reasons for applying to GTTR over School Direct, as reflected in respondents' comments, are set out below:

- **Not knowing about SD: Lack of information, advice and clarity**

Some of those doing PGCEs at universities were simply unaware of School Direct at the time of application, assuming the PGCE route to be the only option to teacher training. Students in particular were highly familiar with UCAS and may not have explored other options.

No, because at the start I didn't even really realise what School Direct was, so I didn't really explore that avenue because I didn't understand it. I just literally went for the GTTR because that was something that was the same format as UCAS and I was kind of familiar with so I just went with that... It was really the only one that was sold to me.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

One GTTR applicant had been unsuccessful and had since taken up a non teaching job. Had he known about School Direct we felt he would have preferred this. Another GTTR-routed candidate had not looked further than his university for information. He was under the impression that School Direct candidates would not receive qualified teacher status (QTS) at the end of their training. More than one respondent referred to 'Teach Direct', potentially amalgamating the School Direct and Teach First routes in their confusion.

Interviewer summary: He wasn't aware of the options/routes available to those who didn't train via a PGCE. He feels that a PGCE is a much more highly regarded qualification/route than the 'teach direct' (sic) route, where you don't receive QTS.

Computer science, GTTR, Career Changer, Group B

Another similarly felt that she was provided more information on GTTR, and that when she did later explore School Direct, this was not as clear.

Interviewer summary: She had already started down the PGCE route when she found out about SD. When she explored the options available via SD, she found that the information was unclear and confused. She had already received a great deal of information from universities about PGCE courses available.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

- **Lack of School Direct places**

One design & technology candidate could not identify schools that offered SD places in her particular field of design & technology, and chose the GTTR route as a result.

I would have loved to do the School Direct... So it's just a shame, really. It was just really hard to find a place in food technology.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B

- **School Direct was too new/uncertain or 'dissuaded' from applying**

In more than one case the candidate described being dissuaded from applying to School Direct by the university on account of it being in its infancy.

They basically advised me saying if you want to do School Direct, wait a couple of years until it's been sorted out, because at the moment, you're a guinea pig.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

In the case above however, the candidate did eventually apply to both routes and accepted a School Direct placement, which was his preferred option.

In other cases, respondents were themselves too uncertain about how School Direct would develop to make an application e.g. in case places were withdrawn.

I think there was one school in my borough in London that offered it, and then they withdrew it, and the council-, whoever's in charge, weren't quite sure what the situation was going to be.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

- **Guarantee of a PGCE: A more recognised and broader qualification**

Some considered the GTTR route the best on the basis of the PGCE that it leads to (not always part of the SD route). The PGCE qualification was described as more official, government-sanctioned, more respected, or better-known.

Well, the salaried, you know, definitely, I imagine they're getting paid a proper salary. The thing is, the people that are on salaries that don't get the PGCEs... at the end because the unsalaried, you do get a PGCE as well. You don't just get the qualified teacher status, you also get the PGCE... For me, it's good to have a qualification. You can graduate from it, so you've got something to definitely show for it at the end. Also, if you wanted to, in future, it's a globally-recognised qualification so you could go and teach somewhere else. Not that I'm planning to do that but it's nice to know that I could if I wanted to.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Applied to GTTR because he was advised by a couple of friends that it was the best route, more official, government-sanctioned, more respected, better-known.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Some were therefore concerned that School Direct candidates may somehow be less highly qualified than those with a PGCE. The PGCE also provides credits towards further education such as a Master in Education etc.

I don't think I paid attention to that (School Direct Route). I found PGCE to be something I set my mind on... thought that the PGCE was the main route that everybody goes.

Physics, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Others felt that the GTTR route offered the trainee broader experience and therefore better preparation for teaching because of its multiple placements.

- **Preference for the university environment over the classroom**

Candidates applying to GTTR tended to emphasize the benefits of the university environment and greater input from the university. This included a perception that there would be more support for trainees doing a PGCE.

Just because I thought you got a lot more support and advice along the way. If you were simply in a school, whatever the school's got to offer, that's what you're stuck with. That's how it felt to me. Whereas, at least if you go through PGCE, GTTR, you've got university, all the researchers background, plus you've got the schools.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

One considered that the university would be more focused on the outcome of the trainee, whereas the school would have its own outcome as the top priority.

Interviewer summary: There was not much financial advantage to the SD route once he had taken into account the tax free bursary. Also felt he would receive better training through GTTR route because the university has your interests paramount over the interests of the school. QUOTE "the head teacher who is effectively employing you, they have a conflict of interest as far as you're concerned."

Science with chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

One described himself as being better suited to it, due to being more academically-inclined.

I wanted to go through and do a PGCE rather than a, sort of, hands on programme. I've got more of an academic mindset.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Others felt they were not ready to enter the classroom, due to not having enough experience in schools.

I'm glad I chose the GTTR route over Schools Direct. I feel like I wasn't comfortable straight away to walk into the classroom.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

In one case the candidate was not confident enough to go for a School Direct place due to having English as a second language.

Interviewer summary: Felt because she is foreign and because of her language that it was much better to do training first and then go to schools.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

These candidates sometimes lived close to the university they applied to, and so location was also in their favour.

- **Application Fee**

There were very few mentions of GTTR being selected as a result of being the most financially beneficial route, but one respondent had chosen it on the basis of it having no fee to apply, whereas School Direct asked for a £20 application fee.

It ultimately ended up in the same outcome and I was applying for the same training really. Although since then I still don't really understand the difference between the School Direct and the GTTR route. It's a slightly different route but ending with the same results. My placement's the same as all my colleagues but some of them are doing two weeks extra here or there and there's a slightly different structure to the course but I can't really fathom why there's a difference. It's neither here nor there to me at the end because we'll all end up with the same qualification and similar position.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Figure 5: Case study – decision-making on routes into teaching

The following extract from the physics online focus group evidences the factors involved in decision-making between routes into training, in particular finance and location.

I did not consider applying to SD.

There was the perfect provider exactly where I needed it to be. There was no need for me to apply anywhere else.

I applied to salaried SD and fee paying. Although salaried was in maths as no salaried physics in my area.

Didn't want to apply to SD... much preferred PGCE system.

There was no way I would have been able to complete the course without being salaried. I have a mortgage to pay etc.

I second xxxx (much preferred PGCE system).

True SD does seem disorganised, maybe they are just ironing out the issues.

I didn't apply to PGCE as I just wanted to get in two feet first to get in to it.

I looked at it, but there were no places available near to me so rejected the idea.

And ... what was most appealing to you about the PGCE compared to SD?

Not being chucked in to the deep end right at the beginning.

Agree. . and also an opportunity to learn from science professors at uni, researchers who probably have a more theoretical and wide perspectives of educational issues.

Physics online focus group

School Direct

Sources of awareness

Respondents has found out about School Direct from websites, including Get into Teaching/DfE/teach.gov and GTTR, from word of mouth (colleagues/peers/family), from schools where they were working or observing at, and from a range of NCTL channels including the teaching line, Premier Plus, advertising and events.

At the TDA (sic) roadshow, the guy was, let's say, bigging up the School Direct route as opposed to the conventional route, the chap who was in charge of the day. That was the future, sort of thing.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

To a lesser extent, universities were also mentioned. (Not enough detail is known about the universities to ascertain whether these shared any particular characteristic, such as link-ups with schools in delivering School Direct).

One or two had searched for GTP online to find that this 'had been replaced by' School Direct. Others had considered the PGCE as the only option before finding out about School Direct, as detailed earlier in this report. One was under the impression that School Direct had replaced and was 'the new Teach First'.

Appeal

The appeal of School Direct has already been covered in the above section on selecting between routes. Two important motivations stand out:

Being able to train locally is a major factor in the appeal of School Direct, as detailed above. One candidate described how she discounted Teach First because she did not like that you do not apply to an area ('*you just apply for the whole country and then you find out where you are in June*'). Having been working France the year before, she did not want to be uprooted and have to start a new life yet again. (MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A)

Financial advantages were also widely mentioned, in particular for salaried places.

School Direct and the way it was presented through communications and website and so on, seemed to fit my needs in the sense that I needed to get up and running quickly as a teacher, because I needed to earn a salary. I have three small kids and my wife is, to all intents and purposes, not working. I'm really the sole breadwinner, so there is definitely a financial imperative.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

In this case, the respondent also mentioned the benefit of the school being outstanding. In general, this was not widely mentioned as a reason for undertaking School Direct training (particularly relative to location and funding). However, respondents showed a preference for a better-performing school when it came to school selection (see 'selection of school and provider').

I was also keen on the idea that you are taken in hand by an outstanding teaching school. You go to a university, which gives you all the background information that you need, but you get teaching practice right from the word go, and that was what I was keen on.

Reasons for selecting School Direct Salaried or Fee-Paying

When selecting between salaried and fee-paying routes, decision-making factors include the availability of places, affordability/access to funding, and level of school experience. These are set out in more detail below.

Reasons for selecting School Direct Salaried

- **Regular income, more funding and candidate holds the required experience**

The key reasons given for selecting the salaried route were a) wanting the regular income, b) considering the overall amount of funding provided to be higher than other routes, and c) seeing this route as best suited to their level of experience.

Well, because it was like a direct route into teaching, as opposed to the need to reach university, and I already have experience of instructing teenagers, I certainly saw that as a better route in... Under the Schools Direct scheme, I might get the lowest salary they can dream up, but at least it is a salary, as opposed to no salary.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Some of those who applied to School Direct Salaried may only have looked in depth at this option, and not be aware of loans available for the fee paying option.

It saved me £9,000. It seemed like a no-brainer.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: He wouldn't have been able to afford to live in London without being paid.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

But a number had considered other routes and decided that the fee-paying route would not have been financially viable to them.

[I] would say it's down to the life plan. I was getting married. I just want to earn money. Yes. That was the main reason, and it was calculating better, because, even if I would get the scholarship, but I had to pay the tuition fees. In total, I would get less.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Some described their qualifications as meaning they would not get the bursary, or their age as a factor in not allowing them a loan.

When I looked into the route with fees it just wasn't enough to support you for a year.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

This is the only route I could possibly have done. I don't have the option of a student loan, I'm not that age. I have more commitments than 99% of the other trainees, so I couldn't have taken this on unsalaried and debt-ridden.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Some appeared to see this as the first choice of the two School Direct packages, and the one to go for first if there were still places available and a candidate was qualified for it.

When I discussed it with the advisor at Premier Plus and we were discussing routes, this one came up time and time again as a good way of doing it as I had over 3 years experience in the industry.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

- **Simplicity: Financials are easier to understand than fee-paying options**

Some salaried candidates acknowledged that they had just assumed the salaried route to be the more lucrative but had not explored the financial options behind the fee-paying route and the bursary available. Some did not have the time to do this, or considered it too complex.

Interviewer summary: Salaried, because he couldn't work out the numbers on the other one, it looked too complex.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

One respondent studying via School Direct salaried even considered that the fee-paying option should be discontinued.

I'd get rid of it it's not fair. I know you get paid to train, but if you're living by yourself or you're living away from your family, I don't know how you can really support yourself if you're not getting paid. Take loads of loans out or something.

Chemistry, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Reasons for selecting School Direct Fee Paying

- **Not having enough experience to follow the salaried route, or non-availability of salaried places**

The most common reasons for applying to a fee paying place were that the candidate did not have the required experience for the salaried route (or had been unsuccessful in an application to the salaried route), or that a salaried place was not available in their local area.

I think for the salaried route you had to have three or more years' experience in school, which I just didn't have.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Yes you have to have... four years experience in a school to be able to do the salaried route... I was a bit gutted that I couldn't do it but it was nice that I got the information.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Respondents often went for the places that were most appealing to them in terms of location. The following candidate took the only placement left in a 30-minute radius.

Yes, I think at the time I didn't have much choice because, you know, you go to the website and the schools who have vacancies, they say they are salaried, not salaried. The only one that was left was non salaried.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

- **The bursary**

While financial considerations were less of a factor in respondent feedback on the choice to pursue the fee-paying over the salaried route, the bursary was mentioned by some.

One trainee on the fee-paying route considered her route more financially advantageous than the salaried route because of the tax free nature of the funding.

It worked out better for me to go through the fee route than a salaried route, because the fee is tax free, so I actually earn more with the fee than I would if I had salary. The school that I applied to, was one that I went to and I'll go back to, they only had a position for salaried, and they actually changed it so that I could go, they changed it so that I'd get fee instead... It took a few days for them to do it, but, if anything, yes, it worked out better for all of us, really, because they didn't have to pay me a salary and I got a higher salary, in effect.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

- **Not aware of the salaried route**

Some of those on fee-paying places had simply not heard of the salaried route. They may simply have followed the lead of a school for example.

I don't really know... I really have to go to the website and just look about it and know the difference between the non-salaried and salaried.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

I don't think I really knew what the difference was, and I remember going to the interview day and them saying, 'Do you want to apply for salaried or unsalaried?' ... they said, 'Just tick both if you want.' I think the practical sense would be, it's the same job but one you get paid and one you don't.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

One MFL candidate did not consider that salaried places were available in MFL, stating that salaried was for 'science or maths' only.

- **The PGCE**

One candidate, while unsure, opted for fee-paying due to achieving a BCS scholarship and also considered this route preferable on account of the PGCE gained at the end.

I think I'm right in saying that... they don't get a PGCE at the end because the unsalaried, you do get a PGCE as well. You don't just get the qualified teacher status, you also get the PGCE... For me, it's good to have a qualification. You can graduate from it, so you've got something to definitely show for it at the end. Also, if you wanted to, in future, it's a globally-recognised qualification so you could go and teach somewhere else. Not that I'm planning to do that but it's nice to know that I could if I wanted to.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Support in decision-making/managing the complexity

Some considered that the differences between salaried and paid routes needed to be made clearer and more consistent:

Not enough knowledge about what the SD programme was about, the different benefits of undertaking SD through different providers.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

There seems a massive inconsistency with the Schools Direct route as to whether you get on the salaried or tuition fee course. But also whether you get paid even on the tuition fee course.

Maths online focus group

Others felt that the routes in should be simplified. One suggestion was made that School Direct Salaried should be available only for those with significant experience in industry.

So if you did the School Direct, do it as a salaried option for people coming in from industry, great, fine but leave it at that. Anyone from, let's say, under the age of 25 or whatever that's fresh out of college - they do the PGCE route.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Premier Plus advisors, where used, were widely praised for the support they give candidates in making the right choice between routes into teaching.

I think it was... what types of routes, because there were quite a lot of routes. There was the SCITT, the US [unsalaried] routes, and the School Direct program. It was quite confusing to figure out which route would be best, but as soon as I

applied I was actually given a Premier Plus advisor, so I had him there to guide me, what were the difference, what would be the best route.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

For more detail see also the section of this report on Engagement and Communications.

Views on the two routes in retrospect

Now into their training, some candidates gave retrospective views on School Direct routes which are summarised below in case useful.

A number felt that there was little difference between the routes in terms of the training offer.

Honestly it's better to be salaried, but to be honest with you, in terms of training it doesn't really matter because we are all doing the same things.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Others mentioned differences, and most felt that they had made the right route selection of route for them.

The only difference that I've noticed is that when you're salaried you can be left alone in a classroom because you're insured. I think it's something to do with the insurance.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: Thinks the overall experience is similar but is aware those on salaried have a 2-year contract and will automatically be accepted to do NQT year in the school whereas she will have to apply to do her NQT year at the school. However, feels if she ever chooses to move schools during the process she would not be letting anyone down as she does not have a contract.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

One who had since withdrawn from her salaried course felt that a part-time PGCE would have been more appropriate for her needs.

If I'd been told upfront, 'You'll be going so many weeks each term,' I think any normal person would so, 'Oh hang on, you want me to go to ... for two weeks every month?'

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Another had considered dropping out and felt he lacked sufficient experience to be on the salaried training, but he was determined to continue.

As a salaried trainee, I'm employed by the school and the school pay my wages. Therefore I am a member of staff at the school... they were expecting us to go in, from the first day, teaching sixteen lessons a week, which is more than 50% of the

timetable. I had three weeks when I first went, I'd just visit university for a couple of days and a couple of days serving and then I was expected to just go in and teach with no real direction. I didn't really know what they were teaching. I didn't know how to make a lesson plan up. So it was just, sort of, dropped straight in at the deep end, which I can tell you now, a lot of people that I started with doing the School Direct salaried route have left because they just couldn't cope with the workload.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

One on the fee-paying route felt sympathy for those on salaries, since 'it's a lot more difficult for them'. She felt that the selection process should be more rigorous to ensure all were able to cope.

I know that one or two people have given up on it and they've, sort of, gone off it. Sad, very talented, you know... The salaried, basically, you're treated like teachers. So you go into school and actually from day one, they've got their own group and what have you and maybe don't get as much support because people assume that they are already teachers. When you're a School Direct, unsalaried, you're not on your own in the classes, you have your teacher that's already assigned supporting you. So definitely, I don't know, maybe the selection process, maybe people that have been salaried should be people that have got previous experience.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

However, generally those on the salaried route did not express regrets for having chosen this route. One salaried trainee for example considered that more was expected of them than fee-paying students, but likewise felt that this was 'as it should be'.

If I talk to others, the strong impression is that the salaried people are expected to teach more, more quickly. It's fine, we're being paid. You're certainly not taken in as gently as some of the PGCE core students might be, or even the School Direct unsalaried. You're being paid and you have to produce results, and that's as it should be.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

School and provider selection

Number of school applications

Among those interviewed it was most common to have applied for 3 places, although there were also a good number who only applied to 1, and others who applied to 2 places, or more than 3 (i.e. after rejections).

Some were keen to maximise their chances as a top priority and applied to as many schools as possible.

I applied to three schools and I was offered all three interviews. I found out I'd had one interview, went to it, got offered a job. Then I was offered the second interview at the school that I actually really wanted to be at. So I went to that, got offered a job and turned down the first one, and then the third school because I knew that I wanted to be at this school that I got, I just said, 'I can't attend the interview,' basically.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Not applying to more schools/places

Some key for not applying to more schools are provided below, as described by School Direct applicants.

- **Location**

Where only 1 or 2 school applications were made, this was often due to wanting to be in a school in a nearby location, and basing the decision on availability of places within that location.

Geographical area, they were close to me here. I've got no desire to travel an hour at the end of each teaching day, to and from work. There were more schools that could have applied to, but I didn't really see the point of doing multiple applications... I had every expectation that my applications would be successful.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Another candidate was aware that the one school she was applying to was actually part of a school partnership and considered that there would therefore be more than one possible school she could be placed in, but all would be in a commutable area.

Interviewer summary: Applied for 1 SD place because it's a partnership, an independent education provider with a series of 7 schools in the area and the director of the course told her about it in work. He came in for a meeting and ended up chatting to her about it. Doesn't know why she didn't apply to any others, but it was in the area and she didn't want to travel too far. Has had brilliant support.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

- **Being led or prompted to apply by the school**

Where candidates were invited or prompted by the school to make the application, they appear more likely to make just the one application.

Interviewer summary: Applied for SD only because he couldn't afford the PGCE. Only applied for 1 SD place because he already worked there and knew the school so was an easier transition.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

In one case, a candidate had accepted a job as an unqualified teacher, which had School Direct training as part of that job role, as detailed earlier in this report.

- **Time**

Deadlines were also a factor i.e. not having much time to apply for more or taking the first offer in case time ran out.

The true reason is I applied quite late, and that, kind of, affected how many schools there were still available, and I thought it might not happen, but luckily it did.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Interviewer summary: He could have applied for more SD places if he had not missed the deadline.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Some candidates state that they would have applied to more school if they had received their rejections earlier from the initial schools they applied to. This was considered a flaw in the system.

You can only apply for three at the same time, and you can't use that space unless you've had a 'decline'. So, one school that I'd applied for hung on to my application for two or three months, so then I was unable to use that, token, if you like, to apply for another one... A month later I'd got an e-mail saying that I'd been unsuccessful in my application, so I thought that was a bit of a raw deal.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another candidate had not realised that more schools would join School Direct as the year progressed. She did apply for the maximum but would have applied to more schools that would have suited her needs better, had she understood that the list may grow.

I applied, pretty much, the week that the School Direct places came out. It was interesting because you could only make three applications and I didn't realise that they were adding stuff on all the time... I applied in the October and then probably by the time January came round and I looked on there, there were loads of computer science places that weren't there, originally, when I applied in October. So schools were obviously still making their minds up whether they were going to do it or not... I would have liked to have known that... it's not the end of the world now but I also wouldn't have been working as far away.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

- **Other school selection criteria**

As detailed in the section on Selection of School and Provider, candidates sometimes had a wider wish list than just location. One applicant for example had wanted to be in a

'good' school, anticipating fewer behaviour issues but having only applied she was unfortunately unsuccessful.

Only applied for 1 nearby school. Discounted other one because it's not in a good area.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group B

- **Loyalty to the first school offering a place**

One respondent described how a sense of loyalty to a school could be built up at the application stage, which dissuaded her from maximising her chances by making more applications.

Once I started to get involved with them and, I don't know, I found, when you're involved with one school, I found it quite hard to do a different school at the same time. In terms of, you know, they invest in you, we had e-mails, like went to the school, they spent time with me, showing me around. I had a feeling they really wanted me, again.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Motivations behind choice of schools

- **Location**

Location was the most mentioned motivation behind school selection, in particular among career finders and changers.

I chose on two criteria. One was whether they had MFL School Direct salaried places on offer. Second, is it within 30 or 40 miles of my home? Those were the criteria I looked at.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

A different respondent described how, with hindsight, he would have cast his net wider and looked at more criteria than just location.

Having some experience now, I would have looked at the Ofsted report. I would have visited the school. It is important to know what the atmosphere in the school is. You want the best environment to be trained in. So, with hindsight, I would have done this as well.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

- **The friendliness and ethos of the school and whether it was a 'good' school**

SD candidates often sought places in good schools. These were not tightly defined but were generally associated with higher Ofsted ratings and lower expectation of significant behaviour issues, often gauged via local knowledge and word of mouth.

Interviewer summary: Three schools - based this decision on location, as they needed to be in London. Also, looked at the performance ratings of schools and in combination with location, picked the best three.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Location and quality of the school, how it was rated. Why wouldn't you want to go for the best?

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

...basically I just didn't want to go somewhere that was really, really, really rough. I just thought, 'I can't handle that.'

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

The respondent below sought out a grammar school in order to avoid the likelihood of bad behaviour issues.

Behaviour of the kids and getting the work done rather than babysitting. I want to teach kids and move on. I don't want to sit there having arguments and fights with them and try and get them-, spend all of my time, you know, trying to educate them when they're not interested in being educated.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Again, with hindsight, some regretted their earlier concern to avoid schools with more challenging pupils.

It's a renowned grammar school in the area, but funnily enough since I've started there, I had my second placement which is obviously contrasting, and realised that I want to be in an academy or a comprehensive.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

The three testimonies below show how, in addition to school standards and Ofsted, friendliness and support for trainees are often seen as important reasons for selecting a school for your placement.

It was nice that this school had got an outstanding reputation and I think it's been OFSTED-ed and it was outstanding, so I was quite pleased to be going to a school that's a good school. I guess, one important thing now, I don't know if I knew this at the time, to find out what support trainees get because I know that in some schools, people don't get as much support as they should. This one does, it's a good school so I'm quite happy.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Now, it would be somewhere I get to easily and a school that has a good OFSTED, a good report... it's going to be friendly, that is accommodating, that has respect for culture and diversity, yes, I would like that.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

- **The provider linked to the school, including location and reputation**

This was less mentioned than location, Ofsted and friendliness/support for trainees, and some were uncertain before application what provider was linked to their school, but it was nevertheless a driver for some.

I heard from word of mouth that Wolverhampton was probably one of the best for training teachers and that was further out though, because I live in Birmingham, so I could have gone to Birmingham, but I wanted to go to Wolverhampton, just through pure word of mouth.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Provider selection

In GTTR applications the provider appears to play a greater role than in School Direct applications. In SD applications location tends to be mentioned first, while the provider is mentioned as a secondary consideration. This is evidenced in the depth interview extract below.

Mainly location to be honest. I was looking for one near to home because there were none-, I actually live in Bristol and there were none-, no design technology places in Bristol at all. So I went for ones that were the nearest I could find.

Did you consider schools results or their Ofsted at all?

A little. I think, you know, that is obvious from the website and I think you do take that into account so when there's 'outstanding' plastered all over the website then it always looks better.

Did you consider the training provider that would be providing the training alongside your placement at all?

Yes. Again, I mean, I was sort of limited because of where I was looking, but, yes, I did take that into account and actually the university that I'm with is quite renowned for teacher training which was a consideration I think.

Design & technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Some felt that discussions on the provider were not very prominent when applying to School Direct, and in hindsight they would have given this more importance, including ensuring the location of the provider was more convenient.

In hindsight, if I did it again I would pick one where the university for me was nearer. I think I thought it's all training on the job and won't go there that often. Whether that was my misconception or how I was led in the interview, I don't know. I don't really think the school knew how it was going to work.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

However, selection by location could be a source of regret later.

I chose a closer uni based on location and really regretted it.

What would you choose by next time?

The quality of support.

And how important was the provider (vs the location) to others?

Bursary - location - quality of support (I have dyslexia so I looked at this in depth).

I don't have a choice - the provider is the only PGCE (preferred option) within 50+ miles (I think).

Computer science online focus group

When researching providers, respondents used a combination of official rankings and word of mouth recommendations.

What were your top criteria when choosing provider?

Reputation, and good and local schools for training placements.

My top criteria was the quality of the provider.

Close to home, close to school, reputation of university.

Location, uni rep.

I didn't really have any other than pay. I would have done anything having been trying to get on the course since leaving uni.

Thanks. How did you research/judge quality/reputation?

Who my PGCE was coming from also was a consideration. I wanted a well-respected university.

I looked on uni rankings and also spoke to people in education to see what was a good uni.

I was already employed by the school in a different role.

I guess just on name.

I knew that my uni had a great reputation in teacher training.

Ofsted report for training provider, as well as ofsted reports for consortium schools.

Oh, uni... that was decided by the school geographically. I didn't get a say.

Physics online focus group

Application

Why apply then?

Respondents had made their applications for teacher training across a range of months, reflecting, as per the online survey¹⁰, that it is not unusual to apply late in the process.

Common reasons to apply then (and not earlier) as stated by respondents include finishing off PhDs/other academic qualifications, personal circumstances relating to family and home/living locations, and, in the case of career finders and changers, redundancy or other prompts to leave work occurring at that time.

Finding out what funding they can access, as set out earlier in this report, can also be the trigger that prompts a candidate to move from considering teaching as a potential career onto the application stage, even if this is late in the application year.

It was that reassurance from the advisor that I got assigned to, and just, the reassurance in terms of finances, that I would be getting grants.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Some respondents acknowledged that it took 'a push' from the Teaching Agency to kick-start them on their application.

I attended a teaching careers fair. That really crystallised my route into teaching from there.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Received the push they required from the TA [Teaching Agency] advisor and wanted to work with children and teach computer science.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

Others had had the 'push' from elsewhere, such as from the school itself. In one case, the job itself included the training placement, making the respondent a late applicant.

I applied for a job at a school and was offered an unqualified teacher role. Then they revised that and said that they wanted to put me onto a School Direct placement. So I was a very late applicant, around 4th or 5th July. So I did complete an application form for a School Direct placement, but I didn't actually have an interview for it because I had an interview for the unqualified teacher role.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

¹⁰ See Figure 2 of the report *Online Survey of GTTR applicants with a Focus on Shortage Subjects, 2014*: More than half of respondents (54%) had applied to GTTR in October to December 2012, while most of the remainder had applied between January and March 2013 (17%) or between April and June 2013 (14%).

The start of a new year was also said to give people a kick-start into thinking about career change.

I can't remember exactly but I believe it to be around Feb/March... I think it was the new year that spurred me on.

Computer science Online Focus Group

The time taken for decision-making on whether to apply and through what route, including clarifying exactly what funding would be available to them, was also mentioned by some as being a cause of delay.

It was just choosing which one to go for (that made me late in applying).

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

As mentioned earlier in this report, experience in a school is often a key step in the journey to training, and one which some candidates are keen to undertake before they look into the application process itself.

Having spent three weeks in schools, I then applied, because I was quite happy that I knew what I was letting myself in for.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

A small number of respondents felt that getting some experience in a school delayed them, and was not easy to fit in earlier given school holidays etc.

Allowing for more flexibility that not everything has to start in September would encourage more people.

Maths, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

In some cases schools added delay by not responding to requests.

I had very little luck e-mailing the schools-, the local school directly, ringing them up... (Premier Plus) was pretty much vital, I would have found it very difficult to get in otherwise.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Support in smoothing out the process and getting candidates experience in schools more quickly, as well as providing more clarity on routes into training and funding are likely to result in earlier applications from some candidates. This is also covered in the section on School Experience later in this report.

Extracts from the maths online focus group provided in the case study below (Figure 6) likewise suggest that helping more candidates get school experience could enable generate earlier applications and that a more joined up application system would be of benefit generally. However, most of the group felt that nothing the NCTL could have done would have impacted their circumstances enough to make them apply earlier.

Interestingly, this extract also suggests that university tutors can have an impact on when students feel is appropriate to apply. Therefore, in the case of student candidates, these are important middlemen for NCTL to convey the importance of earlier applications.

The group contained a mix of students, career finders and career changers and School Direct fee-paying and GTTR applicants. All bar one had got their first choice of training place, the exception having accepted a second choice which was a little further away from home (applying to SD Fee in January 2013).

Figure 6: Case study – wider support with school experience and a more joined up application system to expedite applications

Selected extracts from the maths online focus group are provided below, relating to the motivations behind when people apply when they do.

Can you all type in what month and year you applied, and then a little about why it was and what prompted you to apply then?

Jan 2013, applied as had gotten many rejections from other job applications due to lack of experience. A lot of experience with children so decided to go this route in the hope it wouldn't be a rejection!

May 2013, as I didn't want my boss to know I was planning on leaving.

March 2013, that was an appropriate time to apply as it was a 'down' period in my degree course so I could dedicate some time to looking, finding, writing applications and going to interviews.

September 2013. Timing was linked to my daughter starting school Sept 2014. I wanted to start the OU [Open University] course this academic year, but to be there for my daughter starting school before getting seriously into placements.

October 2013. Got in for November 2013! Just wanted to start asap after so many wasted tries... Entry in teaching is a nightmare. The GTTR route was difficult as was the Schools Direct. I got rejections from both routes. However quite unexpectedly I was accepted onto a PGCE of good standing after approaching a college through information on their website. The system does not seem joined up.

I agree with above, the system is not joined up at all! I applied directly to my training provider instead, cutting out the gtrr and sd application.

I believe it was Feb 2012 I applied for PGCE then i think November/ December 2012 for Schools Direct... may have been Jan 2013 actually... sometime around then.

November 2012 for PGCE and Feb 2013 for School direct. Wanted to get PGCE application in early.

Did any of you feel that you were making an application late in the year?

I knew I was applying late in the year, though I was confident I would still get a place.

No, just right timing for me - I started course Jan 2014. Think is a bit different for OU as they have start dates throughout the year.

Not really.

Nope, I was advised by my lecturers that the period I was applying was about the time to start looking for a job in general plus maths always fills up last.

Nope.

(text omitted, summarised as all bar 1 got their preferred choice)

Could anything have helped you to apply earlier? What might have helped?

Nope.

Nope.

No.

Nope.

No.

Teaching agency website omits PCET and the GTTR / Schools system is too complicated.

Well the fact that you need two weeks experience before really considering to apply is a pain, you write to loads of schools and get rejected, but there is the school experience program a friend told me about, maybe have this better advertised at beginning of the academic year

Maths online focus group

The School Direct application process

Praise for initial application and for support through the process

Discussing their experience of the School Direct application process there was positive feedback on the initial application stage. This part was generally considered easy to manage without additional support.

It was just a question of banging in those qualification details, referee details, which nobody can help you with, and your personal statement. I just put them together, but I didn't look for help outside, I just got on with it.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Well they don't ask you much, you just have a form that you fill in and obviously you have to give an explanation as to why you want to go into teaching and what your experience is, what your previous career was, and all of that, so it's very much a personal statement. I found the application process itself quite easy. It's not long.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Career changers were sometimes a little less familiar with form-filling of this kind but generally considered it manageable.

Praise was likewise given for the support available to candidates from Premier Plus and other support channels during the application process, where these were used.

Interviewer summary: He found the way that Schools Direct handle the application stage very supportive as they helped find schools that are local and he did not want to move due to their children/family being settled.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Was mainly able to follow the process using the SD website and also had some phone calls for help regarding understanding of equivalent qualifications and interviews.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Help from a Premier Plus recruitment advisor was particularly valued (as detailed later in the section on Registration, Engagement and Communications). Examples were given of when these had helped iron out specific issues for candidates.

I couldn't figure out why but it was because it was getting stuck at university... it was going to university application wise but wasn't going any further. It wasn't going to the schools I was trying to apply at. So (Premier Plus) were really useful getting some contacts at the university and at the school so that I could send my application off directly.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Premier Plus also helped keep respondents motivated through the process, by reminding them that their subject was in demand. This encouraged those who were finding the application process complex, or were frustrated by waiting for references and so on.

I remember it being quite complicated. You apply to a university, parallel-y apply to schools. Where do you find the schools? I was very short on time... I think it was important to know they are-, for me, it was that they need language teachers, so you have that, they want you.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Criticism of the school selection portal and non-standardised school applications

Candidates commonly expressed criticism of the phase of the process where they selected and applied to schools. Some found this phase complicated, confusing or repetitive.

One candidate described the process needing a lot of determination to keep going.

No, the application was hard going, each application through School Direct was a three day job in itself... I was just committed to applying and wanted to get it done.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another likewise found the form filling unnecessarily time-consuming and suggested that schools should be issued with a standardised SD application form, so that applicants did not have to rewrite their applications to suit each individual school. In contrast, another described the process as similar to the process of applying for jobs, so 'acceptable'.

An unsuccessful salaried applicant praised the way that they had been rerouted to fee-paying without having to re-apply.

Most commonly, candidates complained that school placement listings online were not user-friendly. They suggested the website should include a facility which enables the user to search only schools with current vacancies, a facility to see all placement schools rather than just lead schools, and a facility for candidates to remove a school from their maximum of three if they had been declined by that school, in order to make additional applications.

if you wanted to do another search you had to start right from the beginning again. There was a big list of all SD schools but some places had already been filled so it was doing a search on ones that hadn't and the ones that there still available with a radius of 20/50 miles. It needs to update automatically... as by the time you'd apply the position would've gone.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

It was really annoying that they'd only let you apply to a certain number at a time. Communication was poor between schools and government so that it took chasing up to find out whether the application had progressed or not.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Very complicated. When you're applying as well, on the website, a lot of schools will say that they have vacancies. So, it will say a school, say it's got a vacancy, and you'll call the school, which more often than not is not the school that you would actually be placed in, it's a lead school... (And) a lot of the time, they would say, 'Oh no, we've closed that now,' but it would still be open on the School Direct site.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

In one instance a candidate had exited the journey to teaching at this stage, due to frustration after not hearing back from her maximum three applications.

Well, when I wasn't getting any response and I couldn't progress my application because I'd made my maximum three applications and it was up to the school to take your application off the system, you can't do it yourself, when they're not doing that you can't apply for anything else, so you're stuck, and that's the position I got to and in the end I gave up, I just got completely frustrated and fed up with it and gave up.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group B

This candidate would only consider reapplying to SD if she could be certain of a way of having more control to withdraw from schools to reapply.

I don't know, I'd have to review it and have a look. I think I would with School Direct if the process was improved so if you have more control of being able to withdraw your application yourself instead of waiting for the school to do it. So you could apply to schools, think they're not responding so I'm going to withdraw that application so I can apply to somewhere else, rather than having to get them to remove your application for you. So you're in control more, I think that's quite important.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group B

Some felt that without Premier Plus support they would have found the system too complex as it stood, asking NCTL to widen access to this scheme if feasible.

I do feel sorry for the people who weren't on the Premier People, whatever it is, the Premier Plus Group, because it was really confusing and... He guided me really well, but I think that should be available to everyone really... it was really useful... I think the whole application and if you apply for three places, and then if one doesn't accept, then you can apply to a number of places through institutions, but do you apply through the institution or the school, it got really confusing. I could apply with PGCE at the time, because my mentor said just to, you know, make your chances higher, so that was really confusing, and all the bursary and tuition fee breakdown... You could apply for somewhere, but you'd have to ring the school to make sure that there's still a vacancy, yes, it was really a pain... You had to ring the school anyway, to find out if there was a vacancy, regardless of what it said on the internet.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Some respondents considered that problems and complexities encountered during the application to School Direct were due to its recent introduction, or 'teething problems'.

I really didn't understand what that means apart from working in a school. Receiving training in the school. I understand that last year was the first time for the programme to run, so the schools didn't really know. So, I remember I asked a couple of questions and they said, 'It is new for us and we're still looking at how to implement it.'

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

I think the route that I actually took, I think it wasn't clear to them right up until kind of the last minute, I think it was a new course for them, whether they could take me and so, yes, there were probably quite a lot of hurdles... what could have made my life a lot easier was one route, one main source of information.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Once candidate who found the whole process too complex made the suggestion to have just one route in, pre-empting the way the system has since developed through UCAS.

I think it should be all done through one application process and at that application process you can choose whether to go through School Direct or whether to go through a college-based training, rather than applying separately. I think it would be much more manageable and it's easier then to monitor how schools are responding or not responding.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

The challenge of attending tests and interviews

Among career changers and finders in particular, time off to meet attend tests and interviews could be a significant challenge during the application process.

Some failed to attend interviews because of obligations to their current employer. But others overcame the hurdles and considered themselves more deserving of a place as a result.

I gave them three weeks' notice, that I needed a night shift off... and they still managed to mess it up... so in fact, I ended up having to do a night shift, grab an hour's sleep, have a shower, jump into a suit, and then get off for a day of selection... The one saving grace of it, during the interview, one of the questions that they asked was how I could evidence my ability of resilience, which, to be honest, having just worked a night shift the night before, all I had to do was explain that to them. They seemed very happy with that as a display of resilience.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Another career changer mentioned difficulties juggling work commitments and the interview process, also mentioning that the school had requesting references before interview, which could have cause problems.

It was hard because I was working full time. So actually juggling going to-, I had to do, like, a pre-interview skills test at the university, so that was, like, a day where I had to travel up and go to the university and then there were interview days and skills tests and all that kind of stuff. It was quite hard juggling that with working full time, like, the application process... the school I was with requested references before interview as well, which is a bit unusual... it could be a problem.

Design & technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

The cost of attending interviews could also be a challenge. One student candidate described the difficulty of covering all the expenses. She considered that more flexibility should be offered in terms of the start time of an interview for candidates travelling longer distances, to avoid hotel costs.

If you have more than four interviews in the month it does become very difficult.. When people are coming from outside that region and they're inviting you. I came from York and I had to be in Chester by nine o'clock one morning and it's impossible to stay in a hotel every single time you go for an interview because it just gets expensive with the train fare on top.

MFL, School Direct, Student, Group B

One candidate who was employed overseas at the time he made his application similarly wished that schools could have given him some flexibility in terms of interview dates, or a webinar, in particular given the lengthy delay before he was notified.

I did not hear anything for the first month and then chased it up with the Teaching Agency. Then one thing came back to me, an interview offer. I tried to negotiate at how it could be done. They said I had to come to the UK on the specified dates. I then had to resign my work in Thailand at the time and they docked me one month's salary for resigning.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Challenges and barriers after application

The focus of the research was to investigate experiences up to the time the course began and as such challenges occurring on the course were not explored.

Similarly, reasons given by candidates for not gaining a place are not detailed here. A range of reasons were mentioned, including not having enough experience in a school, having a 2.2 degree classification, failing a skills test, failing the English language requirement, being in a different design & technology specialism to the one offered, and missing a deadline or places being full. Unsuccessful candidates wished that they had received more information in advance on what specific criteria the school were looking for, and often sought more feedback and encouragement in general (see section on 'What was missing?')

Interviewers probed respondents for any challenges and barriers occurring after application but before taking up the training, in particular any that risked the candidate not taking up their place.

The main challenge mentioned by applicants after application was a delay or 'silence' after application, which in some cases led candidates to begin considering other job/career options.

One thing that let it down a bit was the fact that they had accepted my application and they wanted me to join the course, but they didn't tell me for about five weeks.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

To be honest, there was a massive hold-up when I'd had my interview and then I was told that it would be a couple of weeks before I found out and then it turned out it was something like 24 days or something, something like three days before the actual cut off point before GTTR would stop it and that was because it went to over to half-term and something else happened and then the person who was supposed to be sending it was off sick, so they couldn't confirm my place... I was sat there going, 'It's not being sent to my next thingy because it's held up at this position'

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

There were also a number of challenges relating to the school or mentor, or poor communications between the school and provider.

My School Direct placement school got put into Special Measures. We had to get special dispensation from the DfE for me to continue my training.

Physics online focus group

Interviewer summary: School came back to her and said they had found her a place, only to tell her that her mentor she was going to be assigned was no longer available, so they could not accommodate her.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

These were often perceived to be caused by the administration of School Direct as a new system and the school not understanding the process, or the process not being made clear to the candidate.

I did have a little bit of a mess up. So I had an interview at the school that I'm at and it was all secure. They sent me a letter in the post to say, 'Well done, you've been offered a job,' blah, blah. Then I contacted the uni to kind of make sure the connection between the school and uni had been made, basically, and they told me that there wasn't even a job being offered at the school that I'd been offered one, and I'd turned down the other job at the other school. So that was scary but it was because the lead school for my secondary school was actually a primary school, if that makes sense.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

In terms of issues that risked an applicant not taking up a place offered to them, financial challenges were most likely to be mentioned.

Issues with securing the funding did delay things.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Student finance was a nightmare trying to get that. I didn't get funding until December because they messed up, so had to wait another two months to get funding. So it was something that threw me in the preparation for the PGCE year.

Computer Science, GTTR, Student, Group A

For one candidate, finding out after application about a charge of £2000 imposed by the university had been a significant hurdle and only surpassed by obtaining agreement with his placement school that the school would pay half.

This may purely be because of the university that I'm at... but I was under the very strong impression, having read everything I could get my hands on on School Direct, that all the tuition fees were taken care of. It was only when I started my placement that I was told that there was still £2,000 outstanding to pay the university for the Masters component... so suddenly I had to find £2,000... At one point it almost led to me withdrawing because it wasn't going to be that easy to find. Again, if there are variations then universities should be upfront. Or there should be a website saying which universities charge which tuition fees. As a School Direct person you're exempt from them, or the school pays, or there is this surcharge, so beware of that, otherwise the small print comes back and bites you.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Again location could also be an issue, and one SD candidate had not taking up the place she was offered because of the travelling distance.

The importance of reassurance and encouragement should not be underestimated, in particular where candidates have received early rejections.

If it wasn't for a job interview at... and being told they can see potential and one or two teachers telling me I just need a bit of confidence and I'm going to be a good teacher, then I think I might have doubted myself enough to give up.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Design and technology

Design and technology trainees appeared to mention more barriers at and after application than those in other subjects. Barriers included uncertainty as to whether it is a shortage subject; a perception of there not being enough places (linked to it being an expensive subject to train in) and concerns linked to different specialisms within design & technology, which could cause confusion and further limit candidates as they wanted to match their specialism with the requirements of their chosen place.

At interview I found that the school wasn't looking specifically for a food technology teacher... I wasn't informed of this beforehand and felt it was pointless being there.

Design & technology, School Direct, Student, Group A

One complained that there was a lack of centralised information on which schools you could apply to for design & technology on Schools Direct. Despite using the teaching line she eventually gave up on Schools Direct and decided to accept a place on a PGCE course.

Yes, it was quite difficult, because there were so many questions and all of these courses that were in textiles I wasn't really-, there was only one site which you could go to, was it like UCAS, or whatever? I remember I was trying to find out more about the School Direct and Teach First or something, and it was really difficult to find. There is a good line you can call, but I found-, I remember that when I was trying to find out which schools would take you for School Direct, that wasn't really that supportive. There were lots of schools for English and all these kind of core subjects, but not for design technology. No one was really, kind of, holding the, like, a list of schools that I could apply to. There was nowhere, like, a bank for it.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

School experience before training

This section uses the term 'school experience' to denote time spent in a school for the purposes of learning about teaching on a non-employed and non-permanent basis. This includes experience organised through NCTL's school experience programme but is not restricted to this.

This section also refers more widely to 'experience in a school' which includes any time spent in a school before beginning teacher training, whether on an employed basis or otherwise.

Motivation

Experience in a school is seen by many as a stipulation of selection and a crucial part of early decision-making on whether to embark on a journey to teacher training.

Basically my first step was just to e-mail loads of local schools and see if I could do placements in any of them, and I just went and did work experience placements and day voluntary work just to try and build up experience and see whether it was what I actually wanted to do or not.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Some wish to arrange some form of experience as soon as possible after becoming interested in teaching, to ensure they know the basics of what is involved.

If you're proactive, you can get in and achieve as much as possible... work out where you're going to fit in, work out kind of whether or not teaching is for you before you even go through the process.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Many candidates already had teaching experience in some form, which had clarified that teaching was a career they wished to pursue.

Interviewer summary: Researched online using website of Department for Education. Found out about different routes available and grants. However then felt unsure that teaching was suitable, following this the experience abroad helped to confirm.

Physics (with maths), GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

How much need people feel to seek out observation days or similar school experience (e.g. with the help of NCTL) depends largely on the level of past experience in an education or training role. The following candidate began their journey to teaching as a teaching assistant and as such had gained a lot of experience observing and received support and guidance through the journey from her teaching colleagues.

It was perfect. One, because you're in a school environment, you learn what the latest ideas, ways of teaching, and also as teaching assistant you see so many different teachers, just in one day, and you get to pick up all the little tips from them. Also, they can give you hints and tips for the interview process, and how to get into teaching and give you what their experience was like. Yes, really helpful, invaluable.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

In contrast, the following candidate had no prior school experience and felt he needed both the observation days and a subject knowledge enhancement course before having the confidence to consider applying.

Interviewer summary: Teaching Agency day allowed him to spend a few days on a subject knowledge enhancement course which helped set his mind at rest, and also arranged to spend a couple of weeks at a local school which made him feel he could do it.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

However, even those with prior experience working in a school found further observations beneficial, allowing them the opportunity to experience different school environments.

Impact

School experience provides essential insights on teaching and helps candidates decide whether the career is the right one for them. It helps candidates understand the 'mechanics' of teaching and what life is like as a teacher.

I spent a week... I got an enormous amount out of that. I gained the opportunity to speak to teachers and pupils about their workload, look at the whole mechanics of delivering teaching.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Experience in a school corrects outdated perceptions of teaching that candidates may hold, based on their own experience of education. It also helps create useful contacts for the applicant and can even pave the way to a training place.

I think it was definitely a good thing to do, to get an idea of what it's really like in a school now because my memory is of years ago when I was at a school, so it was good to see that and to follow a class and actually get a feel for what it would really be like. So I think after that, it sort of confirmed to me that I did want to continue. At least I had a good idea of what to expect and actually I ended up staying at that school and that's the school that I've actually done my School Direct placement at.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

For candidates born overseas but now living in the UK, experience in a school provides essential insights on the UK education system. Asked if her four days work experience had any influence on whether she went ahead with applying, one candidate replied:

Yes, it had a big influence because initially I didn't know what it would be like to teach in a secondary school in Britain actually because I had all of my education in Ghana... I realised I wanted to teach. I realised that teaching was something that I could do and understand and that I have the knowledge.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

In the following case classroom experience not only helped motivate the candidate to apply, it also helped the candidate decide that she wished to go down a School Direct route, where she would learn on the job.

Interviewer summary: Thought about teaching, spoke to some people, did a couple of school placements and decided to apply. Enjoyed the placements, that's why she applied for SD course. Being in a school, being there from the beginning is the best thing about it.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

Time in a school before application can also help a candidate pick their preferred education sector or the demographic context of the school they want to work in, even if this is by eliminating an earlier preference. For the following candidate the experience of observation in an independent, preparatory school helped confirm his interest in secondary state schools.

It was very interesting... but I quickly decided that from the point of view of the satisfaction that I would get, it would be far greater at a secondary school than lower down... So, it was a good experience and it was a good insight into the world of education, but it was very different from what I'm going through now. It was very cossetted, very 'money-ed', let's say, and at the very beginning of language teaching rather than the fairly tough, challenging situation I'm in at the moment.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Even for those with years of experience in a school, additional observation days/other experience can be useful, as 'no two schools are alike'.

I know what to expect from school because I've spent an awful lot of time, spent seven summers every time I finished university, sort of helping out everyday and volunteering but then...if you do it at the same school all the time, like I was doing, you get used to it and you know what to expect and you don't realise what a change it would be to go to a different school.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Experience also serves to give people awareness of the more challenging aspects of teaching, so that this is less of a 'shock' when trainees have to begin teaching in schools proper.

Interviewer summary: Having worked as a cover supervisor for 6/7 years, she didn't realise how much work there was but knew it wasn't just a lovely 6 weeks holiday, etc, now there was a lot more to it - she wasn't going in blind like a lot of people, which is why they left the course. Thinks it was a bit of a shock for them.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The other side of the coin is that experience can show a candidate that teaching is not for them or not for them at that time. Indeed, the non-trainee candidate quoted below had exited the journey after spending some time observing in a school. However, exiting now is clearly less wasteful to all concerned than after a candidate has embarked on training.

At that moment (working in schools and doing observation), I've got to say, it was not what I was looking for. I didn't have the experience. I didn't know the career path. So, at that moment, it was all about commitment. I couldn't have that commitment.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Not everyone changes their perception of teaching radically on the basis of school experience. For some it simply reaffirms their view.

I think my perception was, and still is, that it's a stable career and it's a generally well respected career, you know? It has brilliant rewards but also a lot of hard work that goes along with it. I think I would still say that's how I feel about it.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

But for many there is a significant change of perception after working in a school, particularly in terms of working hours and workload. A number of candidates described themselves as being naive in this respect before they gained real experience in school.

...it all finishes at half three and have long holidays, that's the, I wasn't quite as naive as that, but it was around that.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

I'm quite shocked by the sheer kind of workload that teachers have and I don't get the impression that many teachers really achieve the sort of work/life balance that is something that I've been working towards in my career beforehand.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Lesson planning in particular is often a surprise for candidates, which they do not necessarily pick up on in their observation days.

It's tougher than I thought. It does take up a lot more time than I thought. Especially when I was at school, I didn't even think about what the teachers put into the lesson, but obviously, being on the flip side of it now and planning lessons, yes. I didn't realise exactly how long it takes to plan a lesson and then deliver it, and it not go to plan.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

I didn't realise that even a teacher lesson, the lesson wasn't like planned for you and you just go, 'Right, this is what you do and this is what you say,' you know. It was like, right, you've got to work out how you are going to plan it ... I can't understand why the Institute can't just provide you with lesson plans, the schools can't just provide you with ready-made lesson plans. You have got to keep re-inventing the wheel.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

This aspect of teaching is not always understood clearly from the observation days and placements people undertake before training. Some feel this awareness only truly begins at the training stage.

Although you have-, you know, a lot of people were telling me how difficult it is and how much other things there are behind the scenes, I think even when you go in and do the placements you don't realise how much goes into the planning and the delivery of lessons because you're not actually teaching them.

Design & technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Another candidate, who had been motivated to explore teaching on the basis of being 'jealous of his teaching wife's long holidays' was similarly '*no longer pursuing teaching due to the colossal amount of planning, particularly due to having a wide range of abilities in a single class*'. (Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B)

One respondent felt that candidates should be encouraged to spend more than 2 weeks in a school to avoid nasty shocks after starting training. However, he acknowledged that this could cause difficulties for people needing to take time off work and so on.

Interviewer summary: Thinks people need to get as much school experience as possible before going on to do teacher training because it shows them the realities of what goes on in a school. Not sure ten days experience is enough, but to ask people to take a lot of unpaid time off to get the experience may put people off, so it's difficult.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Difficulty getting experience

Experiences are mixed in how easy or difficult it is to gain work experience. Some contacted schools directly and found them immediately accommodating.

Well the very first thing I did, actually, was to approach the School science department who I had the very pleasant lunch with. So I approached them, said, 'Can I just come along and have a look at teaching, for a week, with you?' They were very accommodating.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Others had much more difficulty obtaining experience in schools, causing delays or in some cases rejection of applications. The following MFL candidate had been unsuccessful in her PGCE application and considered the difficulties she had encountered finding experience as contributing to this.

I didn't get any information from these places. I asked other students and they were just pointing where it is much easier to get experience. So I have arranged myself, go through the websites and go and ask in the schools, which is difficult because not every school is, like, happy to have you in if they don't know you. It was quite difficult.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

In contrast, another MFL candidate (this one successful in her application to School Direct) had received support from the Teaching Agency to gain experience. The experience had been her first in UK education and was extremely insightful.

Yes, I had never been in a British secondary school...I think for foreigners, is really, really good. Yes. I didn't love the school I was in... I think they were a bit, like, doing it because they had to. It was not brilliantly nice, but ..., I was impressed by the way it was organised. It was so fast. You put on the Internet you know, where you want to go, which days. They just, bang, find me something. That was really good.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another emphasised the importance of schools becoming 'more open' to potential candidates.

If you are initially interested in teaching, the schools need to be more open to letting you come in and letting you see what it is like. They don't need to put a nice, clear gloss on top of it. You need to understand what you are coming into with this career and what you are joining. It's not easy. If schools let more people come into the classroom beforehand, so that they can understand.

Computer science, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Another described the Premier Plus school experience programme as vital and did not feel that he could have managed without this.

Was vital as undertaking a school placement prerequisite to being able to take up the PGCE place he was offered, had no luck contacting schools directly.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

As set out in the section on 'School Experience', where candidates begin their journey later in the year, unresponsive schools can mean delayed applications or rejections for candidates on the basis of rushed applications.

Interviewer summary: Felt it was because she did not have required experience of observations, due to applying quite quickly/in a rush, but now working in lifelong learning and will re-apply: I like teaching, I love it, so that's really what I want to do.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

A small minority had quibbles with the support service on school experience. All three quoted below were trainees in modern foreign language, but it is not known whether this has any bearing on why they were less satisfied. The following candidate had enrolled with Premier Plus but had not found the service useful.

Interviewer summary: Wanted to take part, asked for a school placement to be arranged but they failed to do so.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

It is not known whether the candidate's background (previously working as an unqualified teacher in the private sector) played any role in this.

Another had wanted more observation days than she was provided.

It was okay but I don't think they (Premier Plus advisors) actually covered my interest. Like, they were asking me for all the things. How was the interview? How was this? How was that? Tips for the interview. Like, I use all the information, but, for example, my interest was to have observation days, I don't know but one of the policies that you can have through the School Experience Programme, you can have just one observation day. So it was observing French, and I didn't find it useful.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

Feedback again emphasised the importance of the location of schools even for these short placements, with some candidates unable to travel far.

It was useful but a bit inconvenient because they give you the schools that were, like, far, far away from the place where I live so, yes, it was a bit difficult. I just found one that was convenient for me from the schools that they were offering me. The other ones I have to arrange myself, which is difficult because it is not easy to go on a place at school.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group B

Figure 7: Case study – process and ease/difficulty of getting school experience before training

The following extract from the physics online focus group covers the topic of getting experience in a school and different ways that candidate approach this. Some candidates experience difficulty when trying to organise this themselves. This group, as others, described experience as an important way of reducing concerns about teaching and progressing towards application.

Did everyone get school experience before application? And was it easy to get?

I had one day at ... academy... Was easy to get.

Yeah I did and it was easy to get. But only 1 day.

I had. It was easy because I was well supported to find a school.

I did, but limited, and I found it rather hard to organise.

I had tonnes through employment in the Army and again as a Cover Supervisor for a year and then a HLTA [higher level teaching assistants]. The money was rubbish though.

Did you organise the school experience yourself, or with support from elsewhere?

Applied myself for employment.

I organised it myself by calling the school

I did it through some education website.

I tried to organise it myself. I found without a specific contact in a school it was tricky to find a way in.

Physics online focus group

Shortage subjects

Shortage as a driver to train

Respondents were asked questions to explore whether being in a 'shortage subject' was a driver in taking up teacher training. Responses suggest that this was indeed a driver.

It's really someone telling me they are actually looking for teachers. I think that was the case, like, was they are looking for language teachers and I could get paid doing my training. That was the key.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

It was a driver to train, and to train in that subject.

Insofar as it's a salaried role. Because it's shortaged, I think they have more salary options there. Obviously it's the area that I like, I trained in computer game design, so you could easily associate it with computer science. It just kind of fitted in for me.. I probably would have looked at [physical education (PE)], but because PE was such an oversubscribed subject, it doesn't provide the same opportunities for me, and career progression, than it would in computer science, so yes, actually, I guess it was a big factor.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

The three main components which combine to make shortage a driver are set out below.

Awareness of lack of teachers in the subject

Becoming aware of the lack of teachers in a subject triggers a philanthropic drive to 'fill the gap' and to pass on knowledge and passion about a subject, at the same time as alerting candidates to the prospect of job opportunities.

One thing I did notice was that we didn't have a physics teacher for the first few weeks of our A-level, which I think is quite awful that they couldn't find anyone... I thought, 'Do you know what? There's a gap here, I could do this.' If I actually knew what I was talking about, I could teach. That was when I started thinking about teaching, actually... Then you sort of carry on hearing that, 'Oh yes, my child's now got an awful physics teacher at school,' or they're not really a physics teacher, they're actually doing this because they've got no one else to teach...it sort of motivated me to think, 'Actually, I want to be a good physics teacher, I think it's such a great subject, I want lots of other kids to find it great as well.' I think if I've got that passion, I can make others feel that way.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Similar motivations can be read in the comments of the maths, physics, computer science and MFL candidates below.

I know that maths teachers are in demand and bursaries and stuff that they offer obviously show that they need these teachers... that was another driving factor to be honest, knowing that I was never going to be out of employment, that it's a pretty guaranteed job offer at the end of it.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Everyone says the shortage subjects are like gold dust.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Hopefully a bit more freedom of choice about the kind of school that I would work in. The kind of area I would work in.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Advertising and communications with NCTL play a role in alerting candidate to the shortage and emphasising the opportunities in teaching in these subjects.

Obviously all the publicity of lack of maths teachers, I've got a 2:1 in maths, thought, 'Oh, this could be something that I would enjoy.'

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Once I started applying I think I found out through a teaching agency, the woman that was in charge, she let me know there was a shortage in the subject... (Then) as I progressed, people were telling me, 'Yes, we're going to be in high demand, especially in the next couple of years, because it is a subject that is really short and it is something that is new.'

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

Funding

Respondents were aware that being in a shortage subject gave them access to additional funding to train. As set out in the section on funding, this was often fundamental to deciding to train.

I suppose being a subject that was in shortage, there were School Direct places that were salaried. Whereas a lot of subjects, like [religious studies] or drama and dance and things like that, there were no funded places. They're all places that are non-salaried. I think that's made a difference to me.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The bursary was an 'extra kick' to apply.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group B

A small number of respondents had chosen to train in this subject over another (including MFL over English, and computer science over primary) because of the additional funding available.

Interviewer summary: Initially he wanted to teach primary school, however one of the main reasons he changed his mind to computer science was that the British Computer Society was offering a bursary for trainees, which was reported in the press, which was a big factor in changing his mind.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

The additional funding could also provide a reason to train now rather than leave it any later.

I think also the influence to start my training now whilst the bursary that was offered for, you know, candidates with good degrees, that was definitely a consideration to go into it straight away.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

In addition to seeing advertising on funding (see section on 'Advertising') candidates hears about funding from other sources, in particular training providers themselves, One student candidate described how the university emphasised the funding available to train.

Well, I probably wouldn't have done it if there wasn't such a big bursary for it ... it was kind of rammed down our throats at uni really.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

Another respondent, working in a school as a technician, had been approached by the Director of Learning 'because the school had a grant for training in chemistry'.

One had originally applied for biology but been encouraged by the school where she worked to apply for a school direct chemistry place, undertaking a SKE course to enable this. The additional funding available had allowed her to take the necessary time off work.

Unusually, one respondent, training to teach computer science, had not been aware of there being any additional demand for teachers in his subject. However, he still found the funding an incentive and benefit.

To be honest I didn't even know. I didn't know going in to the course. I got told when I was on the course... I just thought we all just got it to help us through the year. I didn't realise that it was, sort of, just for that subject.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Support and encouragement: Feeling valued

A further component of shortage as a driver is feeling supported, which includes being aware of the range of support available. While respondents are not always clear on the exact source or name of the support programme they accessed, they are reassured by knowing that support is out there in their subject, and that, being in a shortage subject, they will receive guidance when they need it to help them reach their goal.

Interviewer summary: Vast amount of support with Computing in terms of online communities (e.g. Computing At School), information and help with lesson planning, there are schools you could go to, master classes and classes to help gain subject knowledge. She's not been to any but knows they're available if needed. They're all over the country...

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another respondent described himself as having more support from 'Continental' or the 'Gold scheme' as a result of applying for a shortage subject. (Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B)

A number of respondents emphasised how they felt wanted, valued and welcomed when embarking on their journey to teacher training. The case study in Figure 8 below demonstrates this.

Figure 8: Case study – shortage as the spark to explore teaching and feeling valued

One candidate was from France and had heard about the demand for teachers in languages when enquiring about adult education job opportunities at the jobcentre.

I moved back to England and having done different things and I was just a bit, like, 'What do I do now in my life?' I lived in Germany and I lived in South America and I'm French, I have these languages and I wanted to do something with languages. Normally, they say, 'Yes, you know, work in business,' and I just didn't want that. It's really someone telling me they are actually looking ... for language teachers and I could get paid doing my training. That was the key. A really nice way to use what I'm good at and it's a career where you supposedly you get jobs. That was the big attraction.

In France she considered it highly unusual for someone become a teacher at this stage in their life, or to do so would be 'very difficult and very academic', hence she had not considered it an option

In France they don't do that. You don't teach, you don't become a teacher as a mature person. Absolutely out of the culture, so I didn't really imagine it

She was directed online, found the Teaching Agency website, and soon had the support of a recruitment advisor who she talked with on numerous occasions and who helped her through the process, as well as helping organise her observation days.

They put me in touch with the school and then I organised the time and the date with the school. Very good, it was very good.

She described the feeling of being 'wanted and valued' through the range of support she received, including one to one advice and publications (Ten Reasons brochure).

I remember at the time my feeling was, 'Wow, they are actually making an effort to get me.' I felt very, like, they want me. They want teachers. They want you, they are making an effort. Before, I used to be independent and I used to work as a therapist and, like, you want people to come to you and you don't know what to do and it's really hard. Now they wanted me! ... They did this nice brochure, they're putting all these reasons. I felt very, well, not flattered personally, but well it's nice to have something I can offer that people want. It's a big institution, you know, education and it's like they're making this effort. They're showing they're making themselves beautiful like a company wanting to attract you. Well, quite professional and spending energy, time, money. Investing, yes investing in recruiting... It's like, 'Wow, there's a demand, they want people. It's nice, yes.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Where shortage is not a driver

Where respondents interviewed considered shortage not to be an incentive, they tended to emphasise that they already had an inner motivation to teach in this subject, and a natural passion for this subject alone.

It is always something that I have been involved in, even since school, even GCSE. I knew I wanted to do something within IT. I went onto college, I did a BTEC in IT Practitioners. I can't remember what it was, exactly. Everything that I have done has been involved with computers. It is just something that I have a passion for.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

I could use that to help younger kids realise that physics is actually quite interesting, rather than boring.

Physics, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

No... I've studied mathematics and I'm highly interested in mathematics, so that's why I am teaching it... many young people, they see mathematics as difficult, but I like supporting them, teaching them really, in a friendly manner, so that at least they can be interested in the subject. You know, mathematics, one cannot do without it in this life... So it's not because of the funding, I've been teaching mathematics, I love mathematics.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

It played no role at all in my decision to become a teacher. To be honest, the MFL is what I can offer, I couldn't really have gone on any other PGCE course, so it's languages or nothing. I was lucky, therefore, that languages are in demand, because I researched that. The fact that languages are in demand is something that is in my favour, but it's not something that I chose. It didn't influence my decision to become a teacher. I found out that it was in short demand when I was well into the process, it was kind of a lucky coincidence.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

In a minority of cases, respondents had been ineligible for the funding component but had proceeded through the journey to training anyway, in particular those with qualifications from other countries.

One respondent told how he was not eligible for the funding associated with shortage subjects, due to having a non-recognised degree from Singapore. For this candidate, the funding side of shortage was a cause of resentment rather than an incentive, as he felt that he had 'missed out' on £10,000. The same respondent was uncertain whether trainees in his subject of computer science would have more job opportunities than others since he felt that schools were overcoming shortage by employing non subject specialists.

I can't say I'm too inspired by what I've seen in the schools... It does seem that the school just accept that people from other subject areas can teach it. In a way that's good for career options, but it can also mean they don't necessarily want to employ people directly into the subject either, they want people from other subjects who can also teach computing. It cuts both ways.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Another trainee, this time in design & technology, likewise had concerns that the level of opportunity would not be as high as she initially expected, on account of changes to the national curriculum.

I wouldn't really say that there's a shortage of teachers for textiles at the moment purely because I'm going for jobs now, and because Design and Technology as a whole has been taken off the compulsory curriculum, as in, there isn't a definite guideline, there are just an odd few words in the curriculum of how to do the subject, I think a lot of schools are steering away from it.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Very few were unaware of their subject being in shortage, but this was in evidence, in a range of subjects, particularly design and technology. Again, this candidate was keen to emphasise her passion for the subject as the driver, rather than other factors.

You're teaching a subject that is considered a shortage subject. So there is a demand for teachers in that subject. Were you aware of that?

I wasn't actually aware to be honest. I thought it was one of the ones that more people went for because, you know, a lot of graduates seem to go for it. So, yes, that's interesting actually... I enjoy passing on skills and knowledge, and for me it's very much subject based as well, which is why I wanted to do secondary design technology rather than doing primary or something because, I am very enthusiastic about the subject and I actually enjoy, sort of, seeing the students engaged and enthused about the subject.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

A focus on shortage subject awareness by subject area

Shortage subjects

Respondents in the maths group showed strong awareness of being in a shortage subject, and the benefits this brings, as shown in the extract below.

What made you choose to teach in maths rather than another subject?

One big factor for me was job opportunities. As I understood it and have indeed found there is never a shortage of maths jobs both in England but also when exploring the possibility for possibly moving.

What do you see the term 'shortage subject' as meaning?

Shortage subject is derived from political considerations about what is good for the economy.

Subject where a shortage of teachers for.

I see it as meaning a subject where there is not enough quality maths teachers to cope with the increasing amount of hours dedicated to maths within schools, particularly as they are soon going to have to continue with maths of some description post 16.

A subject that no one really wants to teach, I always get funny looks (as if to say I'm either really brave or crazy) when I say I'm training to be a maths teacher.

more teachers needed than trained teachers to teach it.

Also as ... alludes to - important for economy.

I'm with ... Not one of my friends from university would ever have considered going into teaching.

Did knowing you were in a shortage subject impact on your decision to enter teaching? How?

Yes, more likely to be a job.

It meant that at very least as long as I was half decent I would have a good chance of getting a job.

Yes, only in the sense that there was a bursary available and I wouldn't be able to do otherwise. But I have always loved maths and wanted to teach.

Not really - I think I would have applied regardless.

Yes, maths is a fundamental skill that people really overlook. We very genuinely use everyday, I honestly feel that we should be encouraging maths and I wanted to do that.

Well my preferred subjects were all of the "shortage" subjects anyway out of any route, but no the fact that it is a shortage subject did not impact my decision, I chose maths for the content of the subject not for the future job security - that's just a bonus!

Definitely. when I did my MSc in multimedia I came out and discovered there really wasn't an industry to go into. that's not a mistake I was going to make again. Also my engineering degree was mechanical and that is very unfashionable too.

Maths online focus gGroup

Physics trainees in the online group were likewise aware of the shortage, and in particular considered job opportunities a highly motivating factor.

How important was the fact that you are in a 'shortage subject' in you deciding to look at teaching?

Moderately important, I knew it might make it easier at getting a job.

Quite important. Knowing I had a good chance of getting a job at the end was good.

I wanted to teach, didn't matter what subject but it's nice to be appreciated and sort after.

Same as ... It wasn't the main reason for choosing to teach, but it was encouraging to know that I had a good chance of employment.

I would have gone to physics anyways, but knowing about the shortage is encouraging.

So more about the employment opportunities than funding and support in application?

If there was another shortage subject that fitted the profile I may have gone for that instead.

I guess so; although it wasn't a major influencing factor.

No I think funding was more important, as I say I could not have done it if no funding.

A mix I guess.

Physics online focus group

In computer science, respondents were a little more likely to consider that they would have trained to teach anyway, but there were likewise mentions of the funding, and demand for teachers, being important.

We haven't asked you much about computer science! How many of you would have applied to teach anyway irrespective of this being a 'shortage subject'?

Yeah compsci all the way for me.

Me ... Thats my bag really. Been in IT all my career.

Yes ... its about making education accessible for everyone.

I would have applied regardless... but with a demand comes more finance - money makes the world go round...

I love all things technology, was definately the natural choice for me.

Yes, I've been working up to this for about 17 years (with one or two set backs).

Hearing about the demand probably did prompt me to look into it to be fair - the salaried route does help.

Computer science online focus group

The mixed shortage subject group again combined a mix of the same motivations, two chemistry teaching candidates providing similar feedback.

It made it an easy decision to change career as it should mean good job security.

The fact that there weren't many chemistry teachers probably pushed me a little.

Mixed shortage online focus group

But the respondent in design and technology in this group did not consider it to have impacted on her decision-making, on the basis that *'I was aware that it is a shortage subject but is also not a priority shortage subject such as chemistry.'*

Design and technology candidates likewise reported that bursaries were not available when they applied, and at the time of interviewing, some remained unaware that it was in any kind of shortage subject category.

No, I had no idea that there was (a shortage). I got the impression that the demand was very much for Science and Maths... it's what my skills are in, that's why I wanted to go for that.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

For design and technology, (re. financial benefits) it's non-existent.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

A career changer previously employed in engineering described his choice of physics over design and technology being based on the additional funding available. (Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A)

Non shortage subjects

In the mixed non shortage online focus group, respondents generally considered that their passion for their chosen subject meant they would not have considered doing an SKE to train in a different subject.

However, there was also a suggestion that some lack of awareness on what subjects are shortage and what support is available, which may mean that not everyone is aware of the opportunities open to them to undertake a SKE to train in a shortage subject. Feedback from one biology trainee suggests that she was unaware of any additional benefits to study chemistry, despite this being an option. She is quoted in pale blue text in the focus group extract below.

Did any of you consider training to teach in a different subject to what you are training to teach now?

No.

No .

No.

No.

I'm a biology PGCE but I could have considered Chemistry...

I thought science and maths were shortage subjects?

Physics is a shortage subject but not the other two.

... Please type in what you know about shortage subjects and what this means for trainees...

Bigger bursaries!

Trainees get a larger TA bursary for applying to teach shortage subjects.

I know that those teachers get a higher bursary when applying for PGCE!

Bursaries are much higher.

They are in higher demand.

Students doing those subjects at PGCE get bigger bursaries.

So there is a shortage of teachers with those particular specialisms and they get a higher bursary to incentivise people to apply?

Mixed non shortage online focus group

Media context

This question was added to the topic guide mid-fieldwork and is therefore was only covered in approximately half of the interviews.

TV and media coverage on teaching

Most respondents stated that they were too busy with the day-to-day demands of their course, and before that with their work/PhD/application etc, to pay a lot of attention to media coverage on teaching.

A small number mentioned BBC 3's 'Tough Young Teachers' documentary series, generally considering this to present a negative view of teaching. However, some found it useful to see others encountering the challenges of teaching (see the case study provided as Figure 9).

Others said that they did keep up to date with sector developments and education policy in the Times Education Supplement (TES) and national news. Views differed on what was covered, but there is some evidence that the amount of changes happening in the sector was seen as intimidating or confusing, albeit not generally affecting the decision to enter teaching.

I guess with all the changes going on with the national curriculum, and Michael Gove, all the changes that he's bringing in and everything. It was all a bit confusing, really, as to what was actually going on. So that, sort of, made me think a bit but, yes, it didn't affect it too much, to be honest.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

Such feedback underlines the importance of candidates gaining school experience to avoid being reliant on the media for a perception of teaching. The following candidate had experience working in schools so believed he had an accurate perception of what working in schools was like versus what he considered to be the inaccurate picture portrayed in the press. He believed that without that experience he would have been worried about going into teaching.

Mr Gove has been making a lot of noise recently ... and the landscape has changed quite a lot, so it doesn't seem like such a good time to get into teaching because of the amount of change taking place.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Some had received information on education sector developments in their communications from support organisations.

Well, I used the, obviously the You Teach one and they started sending me information regularly about different, political I suppose, influences within teaching and what was happening within teaching with changes to government policy etc. so I was looking at that.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Sector information was also mentioned as a valued aspect of the e-mail updates from Premier Plus.

Being able to get e-mails which provide more information on teaching, not just courses but things in the media, etc.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

However it was less mentioned than information on deadlines and routes into teaching.

One respondent sought more support from NCTL to understand education policy and changes happening in the sector, to help supplement what she read in TES and to prepare herself for interviews.

Support... because initially I was wondering where do I get information about educational issues. I have information but not as much as like for the questions I will be asked at interviews.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

Figure 9: Case study – awareness of media coverage on education and its impact

On the TV. I think the most influential things are programmes about teaching like Educating Yorkshire and Tough Young Teachers.

Bad Education.

Lol. I agree.

How have the TV programmes influenced you - if at all?

I dont watch them....

What not to do.

I think that if you were considering your options, that Tough Young Teachers was enough to put anyone off!

I think I knew what I wanted, so I am not sure it influenced me a lot.

They remind me that there are some great rewards for teaching and it's good to see other people struggling with similar issues.

Same.

How about education policy in the news? Any impact?

Not really.

It influences me now, it irritates me how people make decisions but have never been in education themselves.

Gove's thoughts on education are discouraging I confess.

Busy keeping up with lessons and marking.

There's a lot of negativity in the press surrounding teaching. It's all very politicised. I do follow it, but I'm careful to keep my views to myself.

I worry that teaching is already very difficult. even last year without assignments I worked 10 hour days 7 days a week to meet the outstanding grade and if they up the standards again I won't be staying in teaching.

Physics online focus group

Media coverage on School Direct

Very few of those asked had encountered coverage specifically on School Direct in the general press/wider media.

Among those who had, views were split on whether that coverage had been positive or negative. The following candidate had not had the time to follow press coverage in detail, but considered that the media generally supported School Direct.

I think generally the coverage from the press actually is quite good, you know, and the government, obviously it's their little baby so they support it, which is great. I think from a training point of view, it's almost too much to do because you're basically working as a teacher yet you're also trying to do a full-time university course which is quite difficult to juggle at times, but, yes, I mean I think the coverage has been good and like I say I do think it's better to learn by doing, not, you know, just theoretical.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Another felt that an article she had read encouraged candidates to take the School Direct route.

Interviewer summary: Saw a newspaper article about more people getting jobs through the school based route rather than university based. Negative about university route because of amount of trainee teachers that don't get jobs. Article was encouraging people to take fee-based route. Feels glad that she chose this route.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

One had read something negative about Teach First but considered coverage on School Direct to be more positive.

Interviewer summary: Read a couple of reports following on from BBC's Tough Young Teachers programme - the opinions expressed were more probably more positive about SD. Not impacted decision making as it's all been recently when already on teacher training.

Physics with maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

A few had seen negative coverage, including about unfilled places and drop-outs.

Saw some over the summer that mentioned how they were failing to fill their places.

Maths, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Heard a few things about how SD isn't working, thinks there's been a high dropout rate of SD salaried. Said she's tenacious and will keep at it.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

One concluded that the press varied between positive and negative coverage.

I know that in so, like, The Times educational things, I know that ... School Direct was kind of slated by someone and then the next week people were kind of like, 'No way. That's not true. Not how I feel,' and they've written their own experiences. So I honestly think it's very varied. I know a few people that have dropped out because they just couldn't handle it, but I think that's the case with everything, isn't it, really? So, yes, it's pretty varied.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Whether positive, negative or varied, coverage was widely reported to have not made an impact on candidates' decision-making, either in terms of which route to take or whether to go ahead and apply. However, in one case a candidate considered that the negative press on School Direct contributed to the frustration she experienced during the application process, when using the portal.

Given that the majority of those interviewed were now trainees, their resistance to negative press may be greater than those who dropped out before application. However, one respondent was found who dropped out before application and was now considering working as a translator for the armed forces. This respondent described a range of issues including feeling pressured rather than supported by calls from Premier Plus. For her, negative media coverage suggesting inconsistency in the training and recruitment process may have been one element of her decision to put teaching to one side.

It was too much too quickly, too much pressure... I don't know, maybe it was other things, like I'd read articles in the newspaper about how they were trying to reform the educational system, and how there were teachers in there who had got a degree in Play-Doh, and they've got Mickey Mouse degrees, and they've been accepted because there was such a shortage, and now they're trying to get rid of those and putting in people with a 2:1 or a first. I don't know, they were trying to be tighter on the system and put some really good teachers into place, instead of just accepting anything to fill a shortfall, if that makes any sense.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Registration, engagement and communications

Registration

Awareness and understanding

The sample frame used to recruit candidates to the research comprised of the Teacher Information Line registrant database and the online survey of GTTR-applicants. As such, a good number of participants in the research were anticipated to have registered with Get into Teaching, and some were able to confirm when and where they did so.

The majority had registered online, while a small number had registered at an event or through the telephone helpline.

Interviewer summary: She registered with 'the TDA' by going to the roadshow, and signed up with various people/providers there, and then received information, usually via e-mail.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Some had considered it part of the application process, while others had opted in with the intention to receive more information.

Well, I just saw it was an option and I thought, 'Well, I might as well find out a bit more.'

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Respondents were often surprised that such a high level of support was available to them after registering. One respondent started by 'googling IT Teacher', then got in touch with a university provider which recommended signing up to the Teaching Agency. From there she had support right through the application process.

They got into contact with me, organised a phone call with them, then school experience. I think they were exceptional. She was saying, 'Anything you need to do, like personal statements for the university,' they checked over that for me, so they were really good.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

However, many respondents were not able to confirm whether they had indeed registered and what this entailed, or what it had then led onto in terms of communications received.

Interviewer summary: Knows she registered on a site as she got follow-up calls checking her progress but is not sure who was actually calling or what organisation they were from - maybe Teaching Agency or Get into Teaching. She saw these as separate organisations.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: Thinks she must have registered with Teaching Agency in order to get Ten Reasons brochure.... Not sure what directed her towards Teaching Agency, may have been education.gov.uk.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

This is likely to reflect how easy it is to register, and perhaps the informality of the process, combined with the fact that interviews were undertaken on a retrospective basis (i.e. at the end of the journey, rather than at the point of registration).

I think I was too late for (registering). I got an e-mail every day basically because we were frantically trying to get my application in. I mean they were really good, they rang me, they texted me, they sent me e-mails. It was anything that I needed really.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Do you know what, I may have done with the Teaching Agency because I actually remember getting some bump through the post about different routes and, like, pay scales and, yes, maybe the Teaching Agency I did register with beforehand.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

However, there is also some suggestion of confusion over where support is coming from, in particular given that candidates often sign up with a number of information providers when exploring their career options, and given the mergers between organisations and rebranding that has taken place during the same period.

I don't know, it got a bit confusing who I signed up with.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B

Therefore probing was required during all research interviews around whether for example they had received any tailored e-mails, used an information telephone line, received help from an advisor and so on.

In most cases at least one and often several Get into Teaching resources had been used. In some cases these channels were described as the most useful support the candidate had received on their journey, or the Teaching Agency as a whole was described in these terms.

What has been the most important help/support that you have received along the way (if any)?

It would be the Teaching Agency, they told me exactly what I needed to know. I called up saying, 'I'm looking to start a PGCE, will you tell me how to do it?' They said yes, they told me to apply through university, UCAS kind of system, get on the phone to universities to check if they're still available.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Where candidates had not registered nor received communications, the main reason given was not knowing about it.

I didn't have a clue about them.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

One student candidate suggested that universities should be asked do more to promote the support available.

I think maybe more to do with internally, maybe get the university promoting these websites a bit more because, obviously, when I went to a lecture, they literally just pointed me towards GTTR website and was like, 'go on have fun.'

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Some felt they did not need additional support, while others described not having the time to look for it in the rush of applying.

I think in part because everything's happened so quickly. When I first checked on the Schools Direct website and typed in the schools, there was a school which was obviously very local to myself, and I contacted them. Obviously, it kind of kick-started very quickly.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

One candidate described how he felt he needed to be certain about wanting to become a teacher before 'registration'.

Lack of awareness, I think. Also, in my head, there was no point in registering that awareness until I was going into that industry.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

This suggests that some candidates may need to be made aware 'registration' does not need to mean more than 'signing up for communications and support', and that it does not involve a commitment.

Impact and value

Candidates often have a strong sense of being supported after registering with Get into Teaching. They describe the information and advice they receive after registering as practical and useful.

It was the support of it. It was the fact that I felt like, if I got stuck and didn't know what the next step was going to be, I could ring the person. They had my information on the system, they knew what I wanted to do. The advisor was brilliant. I think the premier plus advisors are actually teachers that do it as well. I think it is teachers that do it as an additional role.

Computer science, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

This sense of being supported comes via the range of services available. Where candidates had used one channel of support they had often used several. In particular respondents highlighted the value of being able to have telephone conversations with advisors and assistance in obtaining school experience.

That was very good, having the opportunity to speak to somebody. Then they, sort of, allocated me to a person who... phoned me back every couple of months, just to make sure that my application was going okay...Just it was to have the reassurance that the actions that I was taking, to secure my route into teaching were timely and correct, as it were.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

The regularity of contact from Get into Teaching was generally seen as beneficial.

Well, I mean they also, kind of, helped me make up my mind about if teaching was for me, so I mean I thought that was very beneficial, and having someone who would call you every couple of days and seeing how everything was getting on was quite good.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

E-mail updates were mentioned as useful in keeping people informed on information such as deadlines, application requirements, salary expectations, curriculum changes and wider sector news. A few also mentioned receiving hard copy publications and finding these useful reference materials.

I think they said that they would send a pack through and that was really useful for, like, you know, just having something to actually flick through and read through about the next steps and what was expected in the application and that kind of thing.

Design & technology, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

A minority fed back that they had not gained a lot of value from registering, but these appear respondents who had not accessed many aspects of Get into Teaching support rather than attempting to use support and finding it lacking.

I think I was sent a fairly glossy brochure, which was nice, but I don't think they gave me anything more than I'd already got from reading the website.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Not much - just access to a database of schools she thinks would be available online anyway.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

A lot of e-mails telling me stuff I already knew.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

One candidate suggested that more regional lines of advice could be usefully introduced, given the localisation of routes into training with School Direct.

I think you need a contact; you need either a mentor or a point of contact when there's a problem. I think perhaps if the programme was more regionalised so I could look for what's available in my region rather than, you know, you can go on and look at the whole country. Perhaps if there was a number, or a contact within your own region that knew exactly where vacancies were, where there were more opportunities, they could direct you in the right direction.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Engagement and Communications

Irrespective of whether a respondent considered that they had registered, they were highly likely to have used some NCTL support, in particular the Get into Teaching website. Interviews explored their views and experiences of the support used.

Positive feedback

Feedback about Get into Teaching support was predominantly positive, as shown in the selected quotes below.

Yes, it definitely met my expectations. I was surprised by how many different things were available.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

It couldn't be improved much more because I found the application, the information was good on the Internet and the websites are really good, they really made me want to do it. I got a few leaflets, a few booklets in the post as well I remember, and they made it sound dead good, they had all quotes off the teachers and stuff like that. I thought it was dead good to get me into it.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group B

E-mail communication was very swift, and I mean I got a phone call about six o'clock, so they really do go the extra mile, I would say.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

Candidates describe receiving support that helped them to make decisions between application routes, information on financial options, on deadlines and help gaining experience in a school.

Interviewer summary: The agency helped him through the application process - they helped him identify the best route that he could do at the time - they gave him all the information he needed. In addition, the agency called him once a month or so to check in on his progress.

Computer science, Career Changer, Group B

Interviewer summary: Through Premier Plus she arranged going to a school for five days, a recruitment advisor helped ensure what key dates were coming up, what needed doing, the sort of questions to find out, like whether or not it was salaried or unsalaried, things she wouldn't really have known about.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Yes, it was useful because at least I could talk to someone and explain a particular case, and then they were able to orientate me and say to me, 'Well, you have to do this, and you have to do that.'

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

Negative feedback

A minority mentioned that the website could be more user friendly in parts. However it must be noted that respondents were not always able to distinguish between the sites they used.

Websites could be a lot clearer - there was a lot of information to digest.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

When I was looking at I think it was the DFE website, I was looking for information on expected pay at various different points during a teacher's career and that was hard to track down..

Physics with maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

One reported not receiving the call-back he requested online.

Interviewer summary: On the schools direct website he registered where it says 'Get somebody to call me back' but no one contacted him.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

As detailed in the section on the application process, some felt the School Direct portal itself fell short in numerous places, e.g. by not automatically excluding schools from the list where places were taken.

Interviewer summary: Said you have to search a big database of schools to find out which have SD, and if you wanted to do another search you had to start right from the beginning again. There was a big list of all SD schools but some places had already been filled so it was doing a search on ones that hadn't and the ones that were still available with a radius of 20/50 miles. It needs to update automatically so that you're only looking for the ones that are valid. Also, you're only allowed 3 applications at the same time, so if one rejects you, you have to call them up to get them to remove you so that you can apply for more.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The Teaching Line was seen as friendly and useful by the majority of its users. However, in a small number of cases it fell short of expectations due to advice being considered too generic e.g. in one instance not being able to provide information on the eligibility of qualifications from other countries. The following candidate had been referred online for answers but had not found the information she was looking for.

Interviewer summary: People she spoke to (on the Teaching Line) mainly referred her online. Said the website was unclear as she was unsure from the information how the application process worked. Used the web chat resource; although the people she spoke to using web chat were really nice they struggled to answer the specific questions that she asked them.

MFL, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

In another case it was described as involving too much 'spin', rather than providing unbiased career orientation advice.

I can't remember my enquiry. It was about some applications ...it being over a month and I hadn't heard anything, I was just chasing them up. They suggested I e-mail the school directly... To me, it was a little bit too much polish on it at that point. Maybe I wanted to hear more about problems that people were having, rather than just the good stuff... I suppose it's the double glazing salesman thing. As much as we all know double glazing is great, the salesmen can put you off it.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

This criticism was levelled at the Get into Teaching campaign in general by some, who considered it biased towards selling teaching as a career rather than offering unbiased, impartial or practical advice. One respondent described herself as being aware of 'messages' about getting into teaching when she started working in schools, but felt these did not match up with her experience.

I felt that they present the job of a teacher as a really glossy thing.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

As explored in the section 'Was anything missing?' there appears to be a demand for yet more case studies and ways of accessing the views and experiences of real trainees who have gone through the process.

One respondent dismissed Get into Teaching support as being for those at the start of their journey and therefore he did not explore the support available, on the basis that he had already decided to 'get into teaching'. For people like him, communications should do more to set out that, despite the aspect of encouragement as conveyed in its name, 'Get into Teaching' is to help candidates through the full journey to teacher training and not just to help encourage people deciding if they wish to teach.

I came across these, I suppose, big headline banner places to suck people in, but by that point I'd made my mind up, I was already underway getting the detail as it were. I suppose I wasn't really if you like fresh to it at that point.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Importance of one-to-one advice

Many candidates were keen to emphasise the value of a personalised advice service, either by phone or face to face.

The helpline was easier to use due to you are speaking to a person. That can give you more advice.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

I prefer to get people's experiences, levels and experiences of teaching. I prefer a bit more of a personal face to face approach, to be honest. I got some good advice when I was actually phoning up the [T]eaching [A]gency as well, I made a couple of phone calls just to get my bearings before I even made any applications. They were very helpful, telling me what the different routes are and I think the School Direct was definitely for me. That was quite helpful to find out different routes.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The following respondent similarly described her preference for personal contact, finding it very valuable to have been able to talk to an advisor over the phone.

I think they were able to, sort of, get to know me on more of a personal level, so that they were then able to help me with my decisions rather than just going on what was written down on paper.

Design & technology, School Direct, Student, Group A

The website is essential and widely used, but personal recruitment advisors were often most highly praised out of all the Get into Teaching resources used, due to the tailored advice that they are able to provide.

The School Direct Premier Plus was excellent. The government website to a point, but it was mainly advice for me from a sort of adviser.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Candidates are made to feel valued by the level of personal support provided by advisors. They emphasised the personal, friendly and accessible approach taken by these advisors.

Well, I had the mobile number and name of someone who would help me with anything to do with teaching. I thought that was brilliant, I could ring her any time, literally. She'd answer the phone, 'Hi, (and my name)!'

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

I've had the help of the Continental or the Gold scheme or something, where the lady that kept in contact with me throughout the whole process. I mean, and she's been there if I needed help. Luckily enough, because I applied last year as well, I kind of knew the process anyway, and I didn't necessarily need that much help, but it's always nice to get a warm fuzzy feeling that if I was confused about something or I needed a bit of help or advice or support for interviews or anything like that that I could give her a call. She was very friendly, as well.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Many candidates found themselves with little time to get their application in. Premier Plus support was found to be good in helping them to meet the requirements promptly.

I had additional advice and, like, a sort of mentor during my application process. That was quite valuable actually and really helped me inform and sort it out quickly, because I didn't really have much time to get my application in and get the necessary schools experience under my belt, how to broach my application, that was quite useful.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Figure 10: Case study – web-chat accelerating the journey to teacher training

One candidate was looking at ‘the Teaching Agency’ website and briefly used the webchat facility to ask a question. An advisor gave her information and a number to ring, which she called and was then on the phone to a teaching advisor for about an hour, obtaining a lot of useful information.

Yes, really easy, because I was literally, just browsing, it was just a really way to just find out briefly some information, but in the end, I got enticed and wanted to speak to someone on the phone.

She had heard of the GTP programme from a friend and wanted to follow that rather than PGCE, before learning about School Direct routes from the advisor.

He told me what options were available to me. So, bursaries, timescales of when to apply, all the information on how to apply, kind of, with training routes, the three different training routes, the two on School Direct and then on PGCE. He, kind of, broke it all down for me, so that was really helpful.

Her advisor was then in touch at intervals to see if she needed anything further.

He rang me regularly to check up on the status of my application, asked if there were any queries, he sent me a load of information, like templates on personal statements and ideas and tips for interview. So that was really useful because it was so confusing when I first tried to find it out myself, I had to literally print everything off and, like, file it, so I understood what steps to do and whatnot, so it was really useful for him to ring me regularly and keep me updated.

Having called in July, she had a School Direct place in a matter of weeks.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Views and experiences of selected engagement channels

Websites and webchat

Usage and value

Websites are often an early port of call for those wishing to explore teaching as a potential career. Google is often the starting point but the main websites used, as referred to by candidates, were ‘Department for Education’, ‘Government’, ‘Get into Teaching’, ‘Teach.gov’, ‘Teaching Agency/TDA’, ‘School Direct’, ‘GTTR’ and ‘Teach First’.

Interviewer summary: She googled 'Design technology - PGCE London' which gave her some indication of the universities offering placements.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

It really started with a look at the TDA website, sort of from there to find more information about the routes.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

I mean, the Department for Education, they have quite a lot of information about School Direct, and different options. How the programme looks. So, this was the main resource for me to get the information from.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Went on the government routes into teaching websites.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Respondents described using the website to make applications and to obtain a wide range of other information which is often crucial to progress on the journey to teacher training. It was widely seen as comprehensive.

That website is very explanatory. It's got everything that you want to get, everything that you want to know about teaching.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

When describing their main source of support and information on their journey, the website was frequently mentioned.

I think probably Get Into Teaching website. It's one of the websites I think that goes direct and all that, and I was quite surprised that there was lots of information and where to look for it, what to do, how to get support.

Computer science, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

In the case below the respondent had seen information online that had been instrumental in her realising that her degree was sufficient to allow her to do teacher training.

Interviewer summary: Did a degree in ICT as her specialism then it was taken out of the curriculum/changed to computer science, so she didn't think her degree would be good enough. Then she saw on one of the teaching websites that she could do a subject knowledge enhancement course, so she found out more about that and it pushed her to go for it.

Computer science, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The website provides answers to many questions respondents have as they make decisions between routes into teaching.

I remember looking at the various different routes into teaching, and that was almost exclusively web-based... It was the government schemes, so really making the decision, do I go get a PGCE route, Schools Direct route or-, I can't remember the other one, Teach First or something.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

As set out earlier (see the case study in Figure 9), the website also draws people through to wider sources of support which help them along their journey..

Interviewer summary: Went on DfE website she found via Google. Once she had registered she started getting calls from former teachers who supported her.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Candidates use the website access practical support and tools e.g. examples of 'good and bad personal statements'. But many also used the web in their very early explorations into what teaching is like and how you go about teacher training.

I was made redundant in February. I thought, 'I want to be a teacher.'... and I found out how to go about doing it. When I came to think seriously about being a teacher, I did go onto the National College website (and)... on the Teaching Agency website....

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Case studies and student testimonies on the website were described as a valuable way of learning more about teacher training and teaching as a career.

Researching information on the internet and reading up on other people's experiences was very useful.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

As detailed in the section 'Was anything missing?' there is demand for more case studies that present real trainees' experiences.

Some suggested improvements to the website, but, given the numbers involved in using the website, these were a minority.

Found the government websites 'clunky' and difficult to navigate - could be improved by making their content more easily accessible.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Importance of webchat and wider support

Quite a number of those interviewed had not made use of wider Get into Teaching resources and largely relied on this website and other websites.

Interviewer summary: Used various websites (including government & SD website), but generally didn't use much support.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

Some of those felt that in retrospect they may have missed out on some useful information by relying overly on online resources.

I think it was the Department of Education's website that I was looking at for the majority. It was all the schools direct route that I looked at. I think it was just because I didn't get any leaflets about it or I didn't enquire directly to anyone. It was all online that I was doing it through. I think that's why I felt like I was missing a little bit maybe.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Interviewer summary: Used websites to find information but does not appear to have got enough information online e.g. was unaware that observations were required.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Using the website alone to make decisions on routes into teaching in particular was described as overwhelming without any personal advice and guidance to back it up.

I think there was a lot of information on all the different routes of getting into teaching. It was quite time consuming trying to find out which one would be suitable for you and then looking into that one which I did, would be more like helpful to you and trying to get from there. So for me it was like there was a bit too much information initially.

Physics, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

The webchat facility is therefore important in that it provides a tailored service and gives the user the opportunity to get a tailored response to a question, saving them time hunting down the information on their own. As evidenced in the quotes below, this was considered helpful and useful.

I bombarded the DfE chat advice thingie while I was thinking of applying. They were helpful.

Mixed non shortage subjects online focus group

Well it was very useful, it had a lot of things and I even got to chat on the website to someone who could advise me. I asked questions, it was actually really useful.

Computer science, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

Where used it was strongly praised for being able to provide clarification and advice.

The beauty of that (website) is that they've got chats, chats that can help you. You can chat with an agent. You just go online and there is a live chat. You chat with them. They will give you more information. If you need more clarification about something from the Internet they will give it to you.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

However the chat facility was only used by a minority of respondents, suggesting that it could be made more prominent. Comments in the physics online group below suggest that a number would have used this and found it helpful had they known about it.

Those of you who weren't coming to this directly from doing your first degree, was there anything missing for people like you?

More information about finances for salaried students...Just a bit more clarity or someone to ask questions to without long lines on the phone etc.

I still know very little about the salaried School Direct route - but I haven't looked it up in the past 18 months so there might be more info about...

Where would you have liked this info? Online or some other channel?

I think getting into teaching opens a number of doors that I wasn't aware of before start doing the training course. It is important to be clear where you can go when deciding about a profession to pursue.

I would have like one of those online Q&A things or to speak to someone like we are now.

I think more of a presence online for career changers.

I agree - online, so the info can be found easily when researching.

Did any of you use the webchat facility on the Get into Teaching website? Or social media channels?

Nope.

No didnt know this existed?

Nope.

No.

Physics online focus group

The Teaching Line

Candidates who used the teaching line valued the opportunity to engage one-to-one and obtain tailored advice. Asked what their most useful source of support was, several mentioned this helpline.

Probably the Teaching Line, or speaking to the university, the course leader himself, actually. I didn't really know what to do, you can't really get that much information around, apart from speaking to those.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: She used the Teaching Line about 10 years ago when she was initially thinking about teaching and had a good experience with it, and she used it again as a result. Also used Premier Plus recruitment advisors who gave a lot of support.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

The advisors on the teaching line were generally considered knowledgeable and friendly.

When I spoke to them they had my best interest at heart, they'd find the information if they didn't have it there at the time, they knew the options that were open for me. Again, it's just nice to have.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

The Teaching Line was often used in tandem with the website and the two channels were seen to complement each other well.

I think both the Get Into Teaching website and the helpline together were the most useful, really, because that had everything I needed.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

Some had called it multiple times.

It really helped me particularly in explaining financial side - I remember thinking, 'Wow this is complicated.' That's, all these things I was talking a lot about with the Teaching Agency, the different options.. I called them in a short period of time and I had more questions and I came back. I called them three or four times.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

As detailed elsewhere in this report, it was fairly common for respondents to encounter confusion on routes in and funding options, and generally the helpline could help, although not in all cases, as per the two contrasting testimonies below.

I found the application process very confusing because I didn't know if I needed to apply through GTTR or whether I needed to apply through a different method for School Direct, so they cleared all that up for me. They helped me with that and then I rang it a few times whilst waiting for my application to be processed.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Interviewer summary: Called to ask about funding - they weren't able to give a definitive answer about qualifying for a salaried place.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

As detailed in the section on 'negative feedback' one or two candidates considered the advice given on the line as a little too 'generic'.

Events

Attendance

Only a small number of the research respondents had attended careers fairs or events as part of their journey to teacher training.

Those who had not attended tended to give one of three reasons for non-attendance:

- Not heard about them

No I wasn't aware of the events, I found out about them after they had finished.

Mixed non shortage focus group

- No time to attend

I did know about them, I knew about a good number of them, and I even pencilled some of them into my diary, but then for one reason or another I either didn't have time or couldn't go. I think there was one in Nottingham, one in Birmingham. I did have them down, but at that stage I just wanted to concentrate on trying to get in.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

- Did not consider they needed this/effort in attending (including time of day)

Attending an event takes effort and can cost money in travelling. For those who felt fairly satisfied with the advice or support they already had, an event may not appear worthwhile. To make it easier for candidates to attend, some felt that there should more evening events, in particular for career changers:

Events at a range of times would make it easier for those with a career/commitments to go.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

If you're already a student and you're just finishing off your undergraduate degree then it's fine, but for people who are career changing like I was, it's a bit trickier because you're still trying to hold down that full-time job and obviously you only have so much annual leave you can use. It makes it a bit tricky.

Design & technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

The ability to book in last-minute was also suggested by one respondent who said that she 'tried to go on teaching roadshows' but 'was too late because you had to apply far in advance'. She therefore she conducted her explorations into teaching online. (Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B)

Experience and impact

For those who had attended, feedback testified to the positive impact that events can have in helping a teaching candidate progress to the application stage.

Events can add significant momentum to the journey to teacher training.

The physics teaching candidate quoted below attended a roadshow event where he achieved a lot which supported his journey to teacher training: He made contacts, found out about application requirements and salary scales, chose his route, received insights on teaching and in general was met with enthusiasm which motivated him to progress.

Well, that was where I was able to decide what teacher training route to take and exactly how I was going to do that. It's where I made all the contacts. The training provider, the subject enhancement provider ...Also, there was an opportunity to speak to teachers themselves. They would stand there, you know, it was like a 'ask me anything' sort of thing. I asked them about the money side of things because I understood that you got more money for taking on extra responsibilities and I didn't really know what that meant. So I was able to speak to a teacher about that and that helped me see the earning potential was higher than I initially thought. So that was good...It was great. There was sort of an excitement and a buzz about the place as well. There were a lot of likeminded people there that seemed to be looking forward to getting in to teaching as well. So it gave you a generally good feeling about what you were about to do.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

A similar testimony from a chemistry candidate is provided below, reflecting the importance of being able to interact with providers and other stakeholders at events.

I did go to the travelling teacher events - the name escapes me - and they were brilliant; good talks, useful info and plenty of it...the presenters went through the requirements, all the information that you need to have to make your best to apply and we were able to interact with most of the lecturers in the course provided... it really opened my eyes and yes it really enlightened me actually, I got a lot of information from that one.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

Events can open doors to training by connecting candidates with schools and course providers.

I found the invites to roadshows/open days useful as without attending those I wouldn't have been aware of the course I am currently on!

Maths online focus group

Interviewer summary: Yes, went to a School Direct event at the University of Hertfordshire... where she met a few of the schools she applied to, and the school she's in now.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

A train to teach event at a science museum was described by one computer science trainee as the most useful support he had received on his journey.

Well that involved a whole load of things like the colleges that ran teacher training having displays there, and a series of talks and actually looking into people that were scientists, because obviously that was aimed primarily at people that were scientists...It pointed me towards the different colleges that delivered training....No, that was good and there were presentations by teachers about the pluses and minuses of the career. It was good at explaining that.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

A similar event had been pivotal for another candidate, giving her clarity that she could train to teach chemistry rather than biology.

That was very useful because that was at the point where I thought I would have to do biology and didn't think I would get chemistry, talking to the head of the department and stuff and they were like 'No, we'll definitely have you'. They helped me... That was really good, the event helped me more than-, because I'd been in touch with the university at first and one of the advisors had, kind of, told me I couldn't do the course because of my qualifications but going to the fair that was when I spoke to them face to face and they said I can do it. So it was really helpful.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Events were valued for the practical information provided in them, including on literacy and numeracy tests, and subject enhancement courses.

Yes, so you had-, people actually had just gone through a whole process, and you were able to talk to them. The numeracy and literacy tests that you had-, so there were people showing you paper versions of what it looks like, and little hints and tips on how to answer the questions. So it was that personal touch, being able to ask any question and get an immediate answer.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Also went to Teaching Agency Roadshow - opportunity to speak to training providers and real teachers, and found out about Subject Enhancement Courses (most useful resource).

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Recruitment advisors

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, respondents who had been allocated a recruitment advisor were very positive feedback about the support that these provided.

He was very knowledgeable. I think he'd been a teacher for years and now he was on this line. Yes, that definitely helped me.. He helped ensure I knew what key dates were coming up, what needed doing, the sort of questions to find out, like whether or not it was salaried or unsalaried, things I wouldn't really have known about.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Recruitment advisors were described as helping with decision-making on route-selection and funding options, keeping candidates informed and motivated to meet deadlines, providing practical help on aspects of the application such as personal statement, helping arrange school experience, and generally making the applicant feel supported, valued and important.

They were really useful because when I tried to apply online for schools direct my application kept bouncing back at me... so they were really useful getting some contacts at the university and at the school so that I could send my application off directly... they did tell me about the bursary. They did tell me about the scholarship that was going as well. There was a £20,000 scholarship going but I was too late to apply for that by the time I'd got through to it but it was general just stuff like helping me with my application and stuff..

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

Advisors were said to give a candidate a push when needed. Most found that the tone struck by the advisor was appropriate.

At the time, when I had got into contact with the Teaching Agency, my advisor pushed me, not too much, but said, 'Alright, if we can get this done and send that off, we can get it in motion.'

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

The level of support and accessibility was widely considered 'just right'.

She was just like, 'Anything you need, just get in touch with me. Any questions, queries, what not.'

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

In only one case was the regularity of contact from the advisor described as being too much, adding a sense of pressure rather than encouragement.

There was a lot of, sort of, pressure as well. Not 'pressure', maybe that's too strong of a word, but there were a lot of phone calls, a lot of e-mails, and a lot of bigging up the plus points and not that I didn't feel that I was being listened to, but the constant updates, and e-mails and phone calls. Like, 'We can give you this, and there's this option and that option.' You could look at it in appositive way, that I was provided with a lot of information, but on the other hand, I almost felt pestered in the end... Like I'm really, really thinking, 'Could I be a teacher? Would I be a good teacher? Would I be fired? Would the pupils get really bad grades?' I hadn't even signed up for a PGCE or done anything further than maybe have a phone call conversation with someone and receive a load of e-mails, but I already felt a lot of pressure.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

There was likewise only one example of incorrect advice.

Interviewer summary: Found the conversation with Premier Plus mentor unhelpful because she was given the wrong advice regarding what UK qualifications she needed. She was told that she had to have GCSE's or recognised equivalents, so she sat an International Baccalaureate and then paid to have it translated only to discover that she did not need it.

Maths, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Where other candidates, who had not used this service, described the type of support they would like, or which they felt was lacking, the description often matched that provided of the recruitment advisor service (see sections of this report on the application process and 'was anything missing?'). This suggests that not everyone eligible for Premier Plus support is accessing this support, or that there is a demand for support along the lines of the recruitment advisor service outside of the group who were eligible for it previously.

E-mails

There were numerous examples of positive feedback about the e-mails received from Get into Teaching.

To me they are quite useful because they give you information about teaching and how to go about it, how to be involved, the qualifications. E-mails are quite interesting and quite informative actually.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

The candidate quoted below praised equally the content and tone of e-mails. He reluctantly admitted that they generated an emotional response in him, inspiring him to continue his journey.

Really, really well put together, and adding inspiration like... if I was really corny, I'm not just saying it, I'm not the kind of guy to say it, but it has been like, quite inspirational. The content of it is the right level, it's informative and inspirational, but without being too OTT, which again, all of these things kind of give you the warm fuzzy feeling that you're going in the right direction.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

As application deadlines loomed, regular e-mails combined with other support can help keep candidates informed and motivated.

I got an e-mail every day basically because we were frantically trying to get my application in. I mean they were really good, they rang me, they texted me, they sent me e-mails. It was anything that I needed really.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

The downside is that not all may be read, due to lack of time or spam filtering, and a number of respondents showed very sketchy recall of having received these, despite having registered.

None that I can remember. To be honest, if it was an e-mail, I might have just pushed it as spam.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

I didn't tend to take much notice of the e-mail ones to be honest.

Chemistry, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

However, even when skim-read, candidates could take away important points, such as the availability of funding.

The only thing I remember actually was the title encouraged me to go into teaching, and they offered a grant. That stuck in my mind and I think in the e-mail they said about ways of getting into teaching and the biggest point I think was that they also offered a grant.

Physics (with maths), GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

In one case however a candidate considered the e-mails 'too generic'.

Interviewer summary: Too generic, seemed to feel that they didn't really apply to her.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B

Social media

Those who recalled using NCTL social media channels were very much a minority but were in evidence.

Facebook and LinkedIn teaching pages were useful.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

I followed the department of education on twitter

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Online advertisements about teaching were recalled on social media, albeit again by just a small number of respondents.

I don't spend loads and loads of time on social networking but, there's ... something that always, always pops up on my Facebook and I don't really know why, but it's, like, Get Into Teaching. There's an advert that always comes up and I don't know if it's because I've liked something or whether someone knows I'm a teacher, but it always pops up and I guess that was coming up even last year.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A)

One of the benefits of using social media identified by this research is the ability to gather 'real-life' experience and personal testimonies. For example, one respondent watched videos on Youtube which 'paint a more realistic picture of teaching than some of the TV documentaries' (Computer science, GTTR & SD, Salaried, 6/7 places, Career Changer, Group A). Another described herself as reading education blogs to gain a 'better understanding of the authentic school experience' (Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B).

Another used an (unspecified) website to chat and access case studies.

(I used) the actual university page promoting School Direct and then I can't remember exactly, but you type in on the Internet and you get people's own experiences and it's just like a sort of chat thing. I'm quite lazy like that. I just read everyone else's experiences.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Student, Group A

Networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter also offered candidates a way to connect with acquaintances who are in the teaching profession, as a further source of informal information and advice.

I put 'just signed up to a PGCE' on my Facebook and it turned out a number of my friends had done PGCEs the previous year.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Students from other countries coming to train in the UK tended to use social media to connect with friends and family back home as well as to make new connections in the UK. Some may therefore seek to use social media to connect with other teaching candidates in the same situation, again for informal advice and guidance.

Also on Facebook, I read some comments from the other Italian assistant who stayed in Britain to do their PGCE, advising other people who were asking, 'There is also this and this.' Like, First Teach as well, something.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

But Facebook and other more social media platforms used generally for informal purposes may be less of a go-to when it comes to seeking out information such as Get into Teaching. Feedback from one candidate suggests that she may be more likely to look on Twitter than Facebook for support from an official government source, since this is where she follows organisations, whereas Facebook is seen as a more personal platform.

Not really. I must admit I'm not one for Facebook, and that, because I don't believe my life should be written on a piece of paper. I have since then gone on to Twitter where I follow a lot of companies, and stuff like that, just for updates, but initially, no, I wasn't really into it.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Ten Reasons brochure and hard copy support

A minority of the sample were able to recall and feedback on the Ten Reasons hard-copy publication. Recall of any publication diminishes over time and the time-lapse is likely to be a significant factor here, but feedback also suggests that it could be made more prominent or distributed at more stages of the journey to training, to ensure that it reaches all candidates.

Where used and recalled, this brochure was liked and found to be informative. Candidates described the publication as engaging, informative, and/or useful, even in one case '*absolutely brilliant*'.

Yes - it was interesting ... the information in it was absolutely brilliant.

Computer science, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

I think that was quite good. I think it was really, really bright and colourful and really easily laid out. It was like a booklet with, like, ten steps to teaching or something.

Design and technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Yes I think I had one, from the event I think... It was useful I think, actually. It teaches about how to get into teaching, apply for teacher training, so yes it was useful.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

Interviewer summary: They did receive this through the post and remembers the pages on career security and about scholarships. They found this to be a good resource that emphasised the positive qualities of a career in teaching.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

Interviewer summary: He received a booklet but cannot remember if through post or picked up during seminar but it was very engaging and each page provided information about the different stages of training. And pages dedicated to personal experiences, entitlement to bursaries and financial support.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

In one case it was identified as the specific trigger to begin researching routes in.

It was very useful. It actually struck my interest, then I .. started actively researching a PGCE programme.

Physics (with maths), GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

As mentioned earlier in this report, the professional look and design of the publication added to candidates' sense of being valued and wanted in the profession.

They did this nice brochure, they're putting all these reasons. I felt very, well, not flattered personally, but well it's nice to have something I can offer that, you know, people want. It's a big institution, you know, education and they are, yes, it's like they're making this effort. They're showing they're making themselves beautiful like a company wanting to attract you. Well, quite professional and spending in, you know, spending energy, time, money. Investing, yes investing in recruiting. That's why, so when I sound very, they're attractive. It's like, 'Wow, there's a demand, they want people. It's nice, yes.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

But there was also a criticisms and this was that the publication does not prepare candidates sufficiently for the challenge involved. A few regarded it as too similar to advertising and wanted a more 'warts and all' depiction of teaching, or found that the publication landed with them too late in their journey to add significant value. I remember getting a couple of brochures or catalogues, about School Direct, or routes into teaching, with lots of very smiley, good looking young teachers, beaming at their adoring children, with big quote marks saying 'This is the life for me' kind of sentiment. Okay, great, but I'm not going on holiday, I want to know what it's like to be a teacher.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Perhaps because it came across as advertising to some, it did not engage with them as much as it could have done, and some acknowledged that they had not looked at it in detail.

I, kind of, thought it was a bit like, trying to make teaching out to be amazing and fun and I don't know. I just thought, I didn't really get quite into it, kind of thing. I didn't really read it either, to be completely honest... You know, I knew that teaching was-, like, I always knew that from my family members being teachers, but I don't know, I think they tried to glorify it a bit too much.

Physics, School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

The following extract from one of the online focus group further evidences this.

*What about hard copy materials e.g the 'ten reasons' brochure about teaching?
Did anyone see this?*

No.

No.

Nope.

No.

Never heard of it.

I saw it. Got it in the post.

Oh I had that posted to me. Didn't read it thoroughly.

Nor did I if I'm honest.

It is all subjective and therefore irrelevant.

I actually got it after I got my offers.

Any views on it? How could that kind of publication be improved for prospective teaching candidates?

I liked that the effort was being taken to supply information.

It whiffed of propaganda. Not overly informative but I could understand the motive. To encourage people to apply.

I think it should be introduced at the earliest stage. I, like (above) got it quite late....yeah, more encouragement than info.

Mixed non shortage subjects online focus group

Informal sources of advice and guidance

Friends, family and informal contacts generally were a vital other source of advice, guidance and support used.

One of the teachers that I used to work with, she was the mentor to one of the GTP students at the time. She was telling me about the enhancement course at Chester University and how long it was. It was actually her and the colleague that I used to work with that gave me an insight into the fact that I could do the enhancement course while I was on maternity leave. I wouldn't have tied that together, and that actually allowed me then to do the enhancement job without quitting my job.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Potential candidates like to talk to others who are teachers and with those who are on teacher training, ideally of the kind that the candidate is considering.

Interviewer summary: Not familiar with many materials, mainly spoke to people who were teachers.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: School she worked at was very helpful, they understood more and she could talk to her Head of Department very easily.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Advertisements

Recall

Some respondents had no recall of advertisements on teaching, and others had vague recall, but considered that they had not been an influence in particular those with long-held ambitions to become teachers.

For me it was more of a personal decision.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

I went looking for it rather than seeing it advertised.

Chemistry, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

But for many, thinking back across their journey (varying from months to years), they could still recall some advertisements about teaching from Get into Teaching or other government sources. As evidenced below, this included posters, press and TV.

Interviewer summary: Saw adverts for the Teaching Agency event in Birmingham in 2012 and 2013 in London tube stations, and adverts for shortage subjects, some for physics and chemistry, and some in newspaper adverts (including The Times on a Saturday).

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Interviewer summary: Remembers the TV ad where they were doing a science lesson and the kids were outside. Said it stuck in her mind, so it must've had an impact at some point.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

Some were able to identify specific campaigns that had been positive trigger points in their journey. Others acknowledged that adverts were likely to have played a subliminal role in their decision-making.

I think maybe that (tv campaign), reignited it as well, sort of, seeing that on TV and thinking 'Oh, yes. Maybe I should rethink that'.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

It was something, like, becoming a teacher was easier or doable because the government was giving money, and there were teachers, according to the sign, saying modern languages, another one I think was IT, and there was a scientist.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

Interviewer summary: He saw some online ads that reminded him that in the back of his mind he had the goal to become a teacher.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Message

In addition to information on routes into teaching (as set out earlier in this report), two messages in the advertising coverage were particularly likely to be recalled, or mentioned as impactful (noting that depth interviews were focused on shortage subject candidates). These were funding, and the shortage of teachers in certain subjects.

Interviewer summary: Saw posters at the DLR station near his house about teaching and the bursaries and advantages to going into teaching a shortage subject.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

These messages are covered more in the section of this report on 'Shortage as a Driver'.

Publicity on the funding aspect was mentioned in the online group with shortage subject candidates.

Well the BIG ads in the underground from the teaching agency seemed to be everywhere.

Do you remember the content of these adverts?

Yes - they portrayed teaching as a great career choice for young graduates. They also made reference to the grants.

Yeah the adverts definitely helped, the first one I saw that really got me thinking about it was an advert on facebook... It was the teaching agency - it was the massive "get into teaching" campaign.

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

The availability of funding was also mentioned as coming through direct mail advertising, although the exact source of the flyer mentioned below was not recalled,

Yes, I can't remember if it was the Teaching Agency or whether it was from the government, the department of education. There was a rather nice colourful card hand-out that came through the post, it was nicely produced, it had elements of the application process, sections in it, also a few sections about generally being a teacher, I remember that, it had a picture of a black guy on the front, in the throes of teaching a whole load of kids who looked really inspired. I think it was specifically a School Direct thing, because I was applying on the School Direct website, it mentioned the bursaries that were available as well, which I already knew about. You need to be aware if you're doing this kind of course, that these bursaries are available, it gives you confidence that you can be financially solvent while you're training.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

While less commonly mentioned than funding to train, salary was also mentioned. The following candidate had changed to teaching from a career in the police, and given his current level of income he was keen to hear of the salary he could expect to earn,

I saw advertisements on the website, on PGCE agency websites, in the police office I saw one, on the board, where they advertise on the board in town.

Did those adverts, did they have an influence on whether you considered teaching as a career or not do you think?

Yes they did influence me actually.

In what way would you say they had an influence on you?

... hearing there is a good salary for teachers, that influenced me as well.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

A third key message considered to come through the advertisements was the job satisfaction in being a teacher. The respondent below, while encouraged by the information on funding, was also inspired by the satisfaction to be gained in helping children understand a particular topic.

Interviewer summary: He saw in the national press that certain subjects such as maths and science were being offered golden hellos which grabbed his attention. He recalls seeing a campaign with a poster of a kid's face who looks like the penny has just dropped and they understand something - that's something he thinks teachers get a lot out of - when you can help kids to understand something fully. But the campaign that has had most impact on his decision to apply to become a teacher was the media coverage of the bursary available for high quality graduates who want to teach.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Advertising can also play a role in conveying the message that there is a demand for teachers from all walks of life. This helped encourage the respondent quoted below, who was also motivated by the variety in the role that came across in the advertisement she saw.

It wasn't sort of 'Ooh, there's an advert, I think I'll apply for that,' it was sort of, gently planted the seed a bit more... I remember the adverts just showing...teachers working in different environments, and in different situations, and probably, obviously coming from such a diverse pool. Even though the job is teaching, there are lots of different parts to it. That came across quite well in the advert.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Was anything missing?

Most candidates feel very supported

On the whole, candidates felt well-supported with information and guidance through their journey, irrespective of the route they took into teacher training.

Everything I needed was presented to me, it wasn't like, 'If only they had told me that.' It was all fairly straightforward.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The support was quite good because if I did have any queries I'd have phoned up the teaching agency and they were a mine of information. I'd got my little ID number, if you like, so they knew who I was and punched me into the system.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Well, I'll say that all the support and help that I had to get into teaching was definitely there.

Physics, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

Some considered that the onus was on the candidate to seek out information, but that support was available if needed, and this is how it should be.

All the information is there if you look for it.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Interviewer summary: He felt he was very proactive in finding out his options - he feels that is almost a qualifier in itself; if someone really wants to get into teaching, they will find a way.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

In numerous cases respondents described how their journey began with an initial exploratory interaction with the Teaching Agency and then led to accessing a range of further support.

I rang them up and I talked to somebody and they were very quite helpful... I was enquiring originally to see if there was any, sort of, paid way in or a different wage because I was worried about finance while I was doing it. It was generally stuff like getting started, sort of, about the skills test obviously because I had no idea about them. I rang them about that, just general enquiries really. They were really helpful. They gave me a mentor as well. I think it was because I'd got quite a good degree they decided that they'd put me on some premium mentor things.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

However, the research suggests that the level of support and information accessed is highly variable. Numerous candidates were aware that they were receiving a high level of support because of their existing academic achievements.

I was probably quite privileged because I've got a PhD so I was given that extra level of support. You know, so I was targeted, if you like, as a sort of fast-track case, but that has certainly smoothed the way for me and made it much easier to resolve quite a tricky transition between careers really.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Many were unaware of the range of support channels offered. As indicated in the responses below, when asked 'what was missing?', some respondents described wanting types of support that (apparently unbeknown to them) already exist through Premier Plus and the webchat facility.

It would have been good to have someone to talk to, who was knowledgeable on the topic and could provide advice.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Interviewer summary: Considers there should be more information online, webchat facility to answer individual questions (for convenience).

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B

Missing support

Challenges, barriers, and aspects of support missing through the journey are covered throughout this report. The section below summarises these, and in particular any mentioned by respondents when they were asked 'What was missing, if anything?' at the end of the interview.

Please note that this includes the views of respondents who had not accessed Get into Teaching resources, in addition to respondents who had engaged with the wide range of support available.

Help getting school experience

While some respondents found it easy to gain experience/observation time in a school, including their own child's in some instances, a number had problems obtaining this, e.g. receiving no response to e-mails and calls (to schools) which could be off-putting at this early stage of their journey. Some were not aware of any formal support available, while others were not eligible.

I couldn't get an observation day as I don't have an honours degree.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Where respondents had heard about and accessed Premier Plus support, this was valued in terms of help to get the experience in a school (at all, and early enough to meet application deadlines).

I had additional advice and, like, a sort of mentor during my application process. That was quite valuable actually and really helped me inform and sort it out quickly, because I didn't really have much time to get my application in and get the necessary schools experience under my belt, how to broach my application, that was quite useful.

Maths, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

The findings therefore prompt the question of whether more can be done to encourage schools to be more accommodating to potential teaching candidates, or whether support from NCTL in helping organise observation days/other experience, can be extended to a wider peer group.

Help assessing different financial options

Some considered that information on funding was lacking in their own journey to teacher training.

I guess advice on, sort of, funding or grants, things like that.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

This was mainly related to finance for training, although some also found it difficult to access specific information on teaching salaries.

Many found that while information on funding was available, being clear on the detail for their specific circumstances and choices could be challenging.

Interviewer summary: Found the information about Schools Direct quite confusing. It was not explained the way the grant could have been split up to pay for tuition fees.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

As mentioned earlier in this report, there is demand for wider access to tailored advice on the different options and financial incentives, in the form of one-to-one expert advice.

Interviewer summary: He found it was quite hard to work out what his funding options were because there were so many different routes. He suggests that a service or someone that you could call up and provide your current situation/background and they then give you an idea of your potential options/routes to becoming a teacher, including details of funding - that would've been useful. Having an easy to access touch point for advice.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Hearing about funding available as early as possible in the journey is likely to motivate candidates and potentially speed up their application.

Perhaps at an earlier point it could have been made clear to me that I could potentially be eligible for a high level bursary, it might have assuaged some concerns that I had from a financial point of view.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

Asked in what format they would like this information, respondents say some elements of it should be provided online.

It has to be on the initial website.

For funding I would love to have just a simple website - sources of funding, application routes, etc.

Computer science online focus group

There were suggestions for some kind of grid or flow diagram online that takes candidates as through all the potential financial options available to them in different circumstances.

In addition, given how important financial considerations are to candidates, access to an adviser who they can contact to verify and discuss these options is seen as important.

It was very difficult to find out exactly what the differences are between, and how you would qualify for, things like student loans and any extra funding. The exact difference between the School Direct salaried and un-salaried routes were unclear in terms of tuition fees. There wasn't really a one stop shop. It would have been good to be able to go to a website where it says 'If you go this way and these are your circumstances, this is what is going to happen to you.' So, it was trying to find a little bit of information here, there and everywhere, and piece it together myself rather than having a clear grid of what happens if you go here or there... (Also) I wasn't able to pinpoint a person that I could ring to get all the information. I spent hours on the phone to the student loans people, who with the best intentions in the world, because they hadn't come across it themselves, weren't able to say 'Okay, the difference between this and that will result in this.'

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

A comprehensive list of steps and requirements

A range of small but fundamental bits of information had been missing (or not understood in a timely manner) according to some candidates, which had caused them problems in their journey to training. Examples included a physics candidate unaware of the requirement for an English GCSE, an MFL candidate unaware of the requirement for two languages and a GTTR applicant unaware that you needed to undertake observations for that route.

Most commonly mentioned as missing, across the subjects, was understanding about the skills test. A number of candidates considered that a basic overview of skills test requirements was not prominently displayed on the website at that time.

Unless you read quite deeply into everything, you wouldn't know that you would have to take that skills test before you could start on a course. I found out about the skills test quite late, so had a couple of weeks to pass it, and I'd already been accepted on my course, and if I didn't pass the skills test, then I wouldn't have been able to do it. I found that out, as I said, about a month to go. I think that could have probably been more prominent.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Literally spelling out your requirements. Once I knew that I had to do the skills test it was great going on to your website and finding practice ones I could do, stuff like that. It was just initially finding out that I could get into teaching but not knowing how to do it. That was what was missing. I know it's like silly but if it was just right in your face in a way. You knew to do this. If you go to the schools direct it does tell you straight away what you need, what you'd be doing if you get your QTS and your PGCE but it doesn't, on there, say you need to do a skills test. It says how to apply and how to be eligible for it and funding but nothing like what you need to do to actually get on the course if you know what I mean.

Computer science, School Direct, Student, Group A

I struggled to find information on the literacy and numeracy tests mostly. Especially working out how to book them etc!

Mixed shortage subjects online focus group

It is difficult to pinpoint the best or preferred way that these candidates could have identified all these varying requirements, or heard about them earlier. Prominent and concise information displayed on the website, with a strong search facility to back it up, may well be sufficient. But feedback from respondents across this study suggests that when respondents are able to liaise with a real person on top of the online information, they pick up vital information that they 'would not have known about otherwise'.

Respondents who used one-to-one recruitment advisors in particular felt that these had been able to take them through all the requirements simply and comprehensively.

Therefore, increasing access to this type of support, or similar is likely to have an impact by complementing information on the website.

I just would have liked a mentor type thing to help me do the personal statement and the process of the application. I would have liked as well to have known, obviously, before applying, the material that would come up in the skills test. I couldn't revise for them until I'd applied for the course and then been able to see what was in them. You know, just preparation really. Myself, I should have done more preparation really, but I would have liked to have been educated more on what the process of applying to teaching you'd need to require, like materials and things.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

Events were similarly described by attendees as being a 'one-stop-shop' providing an opportunity to ask questions on requirements and find out if there was any information you may have missed out on.

(The event was useful for) all of those little questions that are hard to find the answers to looking on a webpage. Unless you've got someone who's gone through the process, it's hard to get answers. I'm trying to think what like, but just general advice and, sort of, feedback on-, well, for technology there are different types of teaching. There are, sort of, food, electronics, textiles, and just getting feedback-, I guess the same as the science, you've got three types, what to specialise in, how to specialise, so just advice on your particular course.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

The candidate quoted below considered that had she not attended the event she may have missed hearing about the requirement for GCSE certificates.

That was extremely useful. That was probably the best thing that I did... there were some seminars about the application process and I got to ask a few questions there. That was where I found out that I absolutely had to have my GCSE certificates, which I'd lost, so I could start the process of trying to get those because that was something that I didn't know. That was very useful.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Help managing the journey for those unfamiliar with UK education

There was a strong demand for more information of all kinds, directed at applicants who were raised and educated in other countries. This included information about teaching and the sector as a whole, but most particularly relating to the process of application, equivalent qualifications and eligibility.

I think it would be maybe more clarification, more communication with students that come from other countries, and more support in a sense.

MFL, GTTR, Student, Group A

...if you come from a foreign country like myself, how can I get into teaching coming from the outside? Because I don't have the GCSEs, or A levels. It's kind of confusing because the teaching system is different and all that. So I a lot of research my teaching in Portugal compared to the one here in the UK. I had to search other places in Google, Internet, but there wasn't much information about it.

Computer science, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

Website was unclear about foreign qualifications and their equivalents.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group B

Some of these candidates felt a little lost, based on the support they were aware of at that time.

Interviewer summary: She didn't know many people in this country so she didn't have many people to speak to about teaching. Said the website was unclear; it was confusing to try to understand how exactly to apply and she wasn't sure exactly how the application process worked. "I think having a clearer website which explains everything exactly as it is would have been the main help... Also (the helpline) being better prepared for foreigners who may need to find out about whether their qualifications are recognised."

MFL, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

Help making contact with other candidates in a similar situation may be valued, so that candidates can offer each other mutual support and share information. Case studies giving perspectives on the differences in teaching between countries may also be welcomed.

I don't know what it is for a Spanish person or Italian person, but it would be nice to maybe have a testimony from someone coming from France, as to how you find (teaching) different here. It would be quite interesting.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Help and encouragement for unsuccessful candidates

Some candidates had been unsuccessful in past applications, and felt that feedback and encouragement was missing after the rejection stage. However minimal, feedback and contact appears to help keep unsuccessful applicants engaged and consider staying on the journey to teacher training and applying a second time.

One respondent was no longer pursuing her journey into teacher training due to lack of feedback after an unsuccessful application. She thought that had done very well in interviews but *'Then just didn't get any feedback, I thought that was unusual ... I never heard anything back from the university or the school... I think if I'd have got some feedback I would have tried again this year, but I didn't hear anything.'* (Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group B)

This contrasts with the testimony of a respondent who described receiving support from a recruitment advisor beyond her first unsuccessful application, who went on to secure a place on teacher training.

She would then ring me up every week or two weeks to see how I was getting on with the application and interviewing process. When I didn't get the first one, they rang me up to say why I didn't get it. They give you good feedback. They were then telling me what I need to get and that the main problem is that I didn't have the experience.

Computer science, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Engagement after application

Communication seems to stop quite suddenly after application for some, and when this happens applicants may fear that all is not well.

I took me, like, some time, to one month and a half to get an answer. So, I think that's quite a long time... I had to phone the organisations, or universities, or things like that. They didn't know where my application was, or what I was talking about so, yes, some things were hard to find.

MFL, School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

Some may even begin to explore alternative options if reassurance is not forthcoming after a number of weeks. Automated confirmations of receipt and other communications to keep applicants abreast of where their application is in the process would help reassure candidates.

I think the SD applications lacked any sort of feedback loop, as after contacting the schools they hadn't received my applications despite the fact I sent them well before the deadline.

Maths, School Direct, Online Focus Group

Case studies and more 'real life' guidance generally

Some feel that unbiased information on work-life balance and the demands of teacher training/teaching is lacking. They described information that they see as being one of two extremes – either too 'glossy', selling teaching as a career (and therefore mistrusted as unrealistic), or too negative, scare-mongering with regard to the pressures of teaching, extreme bad behaviour or changing government policy (hyped up by the media).

Interviewer summary: Would've liked to have seen more realistic information about what it means to be a teacher (work/life balance, amount of work, teaching standards, etc)

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A
I, kind of, thought (the Ten Reasons brochure) was a bit like, trying to make teaching out to be amazing and fun... I think they tried to glorify it a bit too much.

Physics, School Direct, Career Changer, Group A
It was quite easy to see how I needed to make my application but what was missing I think is a picture, a realistic picture, of what it was that I was working towards... In terms of the things I've kind of suggested which are work life balance, the amount of work that's needed, the kind of standards that teachers have got to work to.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A
Many used informal channels to find this out, including friends and family who are teachers or teacher trainees.

The reality check questions that I would have liked to have asked, you don't get that on the website so I spoke to a family member and then I went to visit that place in Durham and asked all the questions there. That was that, really.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B
Some had made use of case studies provided, but wanted to take that a stage further. This prompts the question whether NCTL can facilitate ways to help candidates communicate with others like them who have gone through the journey and have insights to share.

I don't know if there already is, but maybe some information or a forum or a website for trainee teachers, so you're talking to some people that are in the same boat as you.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group B
In the example below, the candidate was a career changer who would have liked a way of hearing more about the change to teaching from someone who had recently made that change.

I would have liked to have asked more particularly around the career change bit and it would be good to perhaps have spoken to someone who had been through it quite recently. What it was like now that they're doing that job and what they missed about their old job but what they like about this, that type of thing. That's the bit that's probably missing for me. there were case studies online but maybe being able to speak to someone who's been through it, to talk in a bit more detail, that would have helped. Particularly from someone who has made the career change, rather than just going straight into teaching from university.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

Many candidates were at a challenging stage of the training when interviewed, and perhaps this context made them particularly likely to say that they wished they had heard more about the negatives in advance.

Information about the negative aspects to teaching as well as the positive - and subsequent support to deal with these (such as behaviour management).

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

However, clearly, 'real life' does not necessarily mean highlighting the negatives to the extent of dissuading someone from entering training. Indeed, one candidate described her discussions with a family friend who was a teacher as being part of her coming to understand the positive elements/benefits of becoming a teacher. For her, this 'real life' support was a useful complement to what she saw as the more process-oriented information she obtained from the Teaching Line.

Every time I spoke to her, I thought wow, she only really sold the awesome sides of it, and yet when I spoke to [the helpline advisor] it was facts and figures, and statistics, and shortage subjects, and bursaries available, and schools nearby, and when the start dates are, and you should sign up on here and you should go to a local school, and do nine hours a week voluntarily, and you should put that on your application form, and give me your clearance number. It was all instructions and this is the next step, and everything was immediate.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct Fee, Career Finder, Group A

Figure 11: Case study – ‘What was missing?’

The following extract from the computer science online focus group further evidences the types of information missing suggested by the depth interviews, including advice on finance options, the practicalities of making an application, and case studies generally.

Are there any specific topics you would have liked more advice/i information on at that early stage?

Yes, real life stories.

I think pay scales in academies... it is still a very grey area.

I found the interview process quite a surprise - so some ideas there maybe.

Finance/bursaries etc... couldnt find too much and subsequently chose the wrong bursary... I would have loved to have known about applying for a grant and not a bursary.

The course requirements - primary placements, funding, bursaries, alternative bursaries (BCS) .

Was this info lacking from all channels? Did you go anywhere and they couldn't answer it?

Yes I asked my advisor and he pointed me in the direction of the website. I think finance is a very risky area and one advisors dont like to get involved in.

As stated earlier, I applied late so may have found the info eventually - but not in time for starting the course (only recently got the SLC [Student Loans Company] sorted).

Student Finance were not very helpful... so more information on that (pay scales in academies) would have been great.

Computer science online focus group

Help on routes into teaching – including more promotion of SD

The feedback received suggest a need for greater promotion of School Direct, to ensure that students, career finders and career changers are all aware of the routes available. The content of a number of interviews reflects a gap in knowledge on the different routes to teacher training available. However, the time when these respondents were applying (2012/13 for 2013/14 places) should be borne in mind, and awareness is likely to have increased since this time.

Interviewer summary: Got to be more advertising, especially about school based route, as well as incentives, as she didn't know about bursary and everything until

she started. A lot more people would be encouraged to do it if they knew more about funding.

Maths, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

Some were aware that this information had since become available.

Interviewer summary: Only gap was because of change from GTP to SD as there was a point where there wasn't any information on SD apart from it being new. But now SD is up and running and the information is available.

Physics, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

A number of applicants via GTTR had simply assumed that GTTR was 'the way' to enter teaching and not questioned this until hearing about School Direct from their course mates.

Interviewer summary: She wouldn't have known about it if it wasn't for her school, it wasn't advertised as a route into teaching. More promotion is needed because when she applied for the PGCE nothing was mentioned and she knew nothing about SD.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct, Career Finder, Group A

In some cases this may be more than just a lack of awareness/promotion. Several respondents reported being warned off taking up a School Direct place by the university.

My tutors were all, like, 'You want to do the GTTR as opposed to going and getting the paid one because you'll be waiting forever.' Something like that they said to me. So I just assumed you go through the regular process as well. Some people I talked to who are teachers just went that route anyway, so I just always went with it.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group B

They basically advised me saying if you want to do School Direct, wait a couple of years until it's been sorted out, because at the moment, you're a guinea pig.

MFL, GTTR & School Direct, Student, Group A

For others, there was information on School Direct, but this was considered unclear at that time. One considered that a prospectus was lacking.

I didn't realise that School Direct would be so school-based... It doesn't actually, they didn't have a prospectus, they didn't have, like, a module breakdown or anything, so that's why I spoke to the course leader, so I could find out a bit more about that. He didn't really have much to say on that one, just more about teaching itself, in general, and my concerns about being able to teach another subject. It's all very hazy.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

Another found that School Direct information was particularly lacking for design & technology candidates.

Interviewer summary: She ... visited the government website education.gov.uk but she only came across the SD route when she had already started her PGCE application and found the information unclear and confusing. she was unable to identify which schools offered a placement for DT [design and technology] and there was a lack of overall clear and concise communication around what the course entails.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Others considered that information was available but that the complexity of the routes, meant they never fully understood the different channels.

I mean I don't know if it's the same for all subjects but there were so many different ways to apply for DT teacher training it was very difficult to work out which route I should be using.. so I kind of applied in a sort of blanket way and you know took the one that was offered to me.

Design & technology, GTTR & School Direct, Career Changer, Group A

The pathways, maybe. I don't know, I think, nothing is very clear, there isn't one source that you can go to, to refer to. I think that's it, probably. It is all quite confusing. Without speaking to somebody, it's hard to, kind of, filter through all the information yourself, from all different kinds of sources.

Design & technology, School Direct Fee, Career Changer, Group A

In summary, candidates suggest more promotion of the routes and more one-to-one support to help candidates choosing between routes.

More useful information needed about the different programmes on offer, clarity about the different routes, advice on how to write a good application.

MFL, School Direct Salaried, Student, Group A

Some respondents also sought more information on the selection criteria for a particular School Direct place, to improve their chances of success.

I didn't really know what they were looking for, the criteria for selection was very unclear.

MFL, School Direct, Student, Group A

Would have loved to have seen some data on previous applications that had been made to those schools and their success rates.

Maths, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Types of information and communication in demand

Asked generically how they prefer to access information on these kind of topics, the most common response was online.

Online, because you can go back to the information at any time.

Chemistry, GTTR & School Direct Salaried & Fee, Career Changer, Group B

... online stuff is the easiest to access as and when you need it.

Design & technology, School Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group A

However, a range of other channels were also mentioned, and many like personal interactions.

...talking to people too. What I want is I want to talk to people.

Maths, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

You can ask specific questions and get specific answers. You can spend an hour looking for the answer to a question that you have online, whereas I could ask you and you could tell me in twenty seconds.

Physics, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group A

Discussion reveals how candidates like to use a range of channels according to the type of information, with online as the preferred first port of call, followed by one-to-one advice for clarification and questions & answers.

Face-to-face as a first choice, but online also a good way to delivering information.

Computer science, GTTR & School Direct, Student

I always look online first, but then if there is something that I'm really not sure about, I prefer to speak to someone, and I feel like I can get across what I need to know much easier than sending an e-mail and stuff.

MFL, School Direct Fee, Student, Group B

Online support backed by the facility to talk to someone appears a welcome combination.

Interviewer summary: The general preference was to use her own background research and the helpline if she need further help and guidance.

Design & technology, School Direct, Career Changer, Group B

Yes, online was really important for me... (but) it is really important to be able to talk to someone.

Design & technology, GTTR, Career Finder, Group A

Applicants described the helpline as being useful in view of 'the speed at which I needed the information', while bearing in mind that face to face would not always be practical.

I think from the type of conversations and the speed at which I needed the information the only way for it to be sufficiently targeted would have been through a discussion. I don't think I would have got the information quickly enough through e-mail. I had all the information from the website but it's then exactly how best to apply that to me and which was the best route for me at the time. I think that had to be, given time constraints, through conversation. It would have been better face to face but the practicalities of that were unrealistic.

Chemistry, GTTR, Career Changer, Group A

The webchat facility, where used, was seen positively, but this was not mentioned unprompted as a way people wanted to receive information, perhaps largely due to lack of awareness/familiarity.

Well I think that online is my favourite, given that the website is well structured and the information is easy to access. The Get Into Teaching, I think it was especially good because we could chat with people who are good advisors. You could have real life chats, and I was quite surprised with it.

Computer science, Schools Direct Salaried, Career Finder, Group B

Respondents accepted that e-mail is the most usual form of direct communications, and this was often found useful. But they were divided in whether this or post were preferred, as evidenced in the two contrasting testimonies below.

It's more time consuming, through the post, clutter. As soon as I receive something through the post, I open it, and then put it down. You might put it under a load of paper. Whereas, if I get an e-mail, I can flag it, or just put it somewhere, where I know where it is; or it just immediately gets my attention. I've got an iPhone, so for me in particular, it is a lot easier.

Computer science, GTTR, Student, Group A

I tend to prefer things probably via post. I know it's old-fashioned or whatever, but it's purely because if I get the information it's there, whereas if it's online, it can be overlooked really easily or considered junk e-mail or whatever.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Hard copy for the most important 'reference' materials is likely to be welcomed, while time-specific communications are considered useful by e-mail.

I think when it comes to something as important as that, it is easier to read something when it's on paper rather than on a screen... rather than just click, click, click gone. That's what I think anyway.

Design & technology, GTTR, Student, Group A

Interviewer summary: He thinks that postal, e-mail and telephone channels are of equal weight for him - he said it was nice to get something tangible in the post to sit down and read and share with his wife while e-mails were also useful because they jog your memory and make you act.

Computer science, School Direct Salaried, Career Changer, Group B

The journey in one word

All respondents were asked to summarise their journey to teacher training in one word irrespective of their route and current training status. This was unprompted. Most managed this, although some allowed themselves several!

A word-cloud summary of responses is provided below, reflecting a range of positive, neutral and negative reflections. ‘Easy’, ‘natural’ and ‘seamless’ contrast with ‘difficult’, ‘naïve’ and ‘arduous’.

Words mentioned by a number of respondents include challenging (12 mentions), exciting (8), rollercoaster (6), long (6), and stressful (5).

Easy and difficult were mentioned by 4 respondents apiece and 4 mentions were also made of smooth, rewarding and confusing.

In summary, there is a great deal of variability in how candidates experience the journey from interest in teaching through to teacher training, but commonly the journey to training is considered rigorous and demanding in a way that many recognise to be positive.

Figure 12: Word Cloud – the journey in one word. Source: Wordle.



(Sample: 118 respondents)

Other reports on the journey to teacher training

This report is one of four reports. The other reports are:

- Research brief
- Technical annexe: careers fair exit survey
- Technical annexe: Online survey of graduate teacher training registry GTTR applicants with a focus on shortage subjects

All the reports are available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Appendix 1: Depth interviews topic guide

Warm Up and context

- Confirm details from the booking script including whether in training or not, what stage they are at of their training if applicable, subject, when started training, when made application, where training, which route(s) taken into teacher training.
- How long have you been interested in teaching?
- Can I ask your age? (explore whether has had another career/considered other work first)

Positive influencers and drivers

- What made you interested in teaching? Explore– any materials, media campaigns, organisations, people, events etc?
- What has encouraged you to pursue it to where you are now?
- What has been the most important help/support that you have received along the way (if any)?
- If applicable: You are teaching a subject considered a 'shortage subject' so there is a demand for teachers in this subject. Was this a factor in you planning a career in teaching? In what way(s)? What benefits does it bring?
- What made you pick this subject? (explore whether did degree in this/ or changed to this from another subject, and why)

Challenges and barriers

- Was any particular help and support missing along the way?
- Was there a stage where you felt you may not pursue your interest in teaching? When was this and what prompted it? What helped you overcome it, if applicable?
 - If mentions anything about behaviour management/dealing with the children, unpick this – is it fear about dealing with individual difficult pupils, or managing the whole class on their own, or something else? What kind of support might help with that?
- What (other) challenges have you met along the way, if any?
- Have you ever had any concerns or doubts about teaching? Do you still feel any of these? What helped you overcome those, if applicable?

Initial interest in teaching

- What would you say was the biggest factor in initially making you interested in teaching?
- Was advertising/ were media campaigns on teaching a factor? If so, how? (explore detail, use prompts)
- Was social media or web-based information a factor? If so, how? (explore detail, use prompts)
- How did you initially go about investigating teaching as a career?
- What was your perception of teaching as a career at that stage? Has that perception changed since? (For the better or worse?)
- Where did you go for more information or advice at that early stage?
- What materials did you see? What websites did you access? (If nothing) why not?
- In your opinion, is anything missing in terms of help, support and encouragement for those with an initial interest in teaching?

Registration of interest/ engagement with support bodies and receipt of communications

- Did you register your interest in teaching anywhere before you applied? Where? Was it with Get into Teaching/NCTL/ DfE/ Teaching Agency (TDA)/other? (explore perception of who they registered with)
- Did you register online/at an event/other?

Explore what people understand by registration

IF DID NOT REGISTER

- Why did you not register? (explore reasons – did you know about it?)
- Have you seen/used any Get into Teaching resources anyway? Which? (explore usefulness)
- Did you receive support and advice about getting into teaching elsewhere? Where?

IF REGISTERED

- What would you say was the biggest factor making you register?
- Was advertising/ were media campaigns on teaching a factor? If so, how?
- What have you gained from registering? (benefits)
- What resources have you used? (see Get into Teaching Resource list on back page)
- Did Get into Teaching meet your expectations? Why/Why not?
- Could it have done more to facilitate your journey into teacher training?

ALL –

- What resources did you use to inform yourself on teaching and routes into teaching before you applied? (use back page as prompts if needed). Explore – did you attend any events; receive communications from DfE/NCTL/TDA/Teaching Agency; see any recruitment advisors; have school experience; face-to-face discussion with teachers, providers, subject association representatives; paper brochures/letters, and interactions with peers? What about since you applied?
- Explore experiences and views of resources used- What was most useful? Easiest to use?
- What are your general preferences in terms of how you receive information?
Online/paper/tel/f2f etc

Read out full list of resources on back page to double-check recall, uses and views

Joining a course or programme

- Have you made an application to teacher training? (If so, when?)
- If no, do you plan to? When do you intend to apply? Why have you not yet applied?
- If yes, what prompted you to move from being interested to making an application? /Why did you apply?
- What route or routes did you apply through (GTTR/School Direct /both)?
- What made you apply through one only/ through several routes? Why these routes?
EXPLORE why they chose the route they did into teaching.
- Were you successful or unsuccessful in your application?
- If successful – Was this your first choice application?
 - If rejected from first choice routes e.g. School Direct did you/will you re-apply to the other routes? Where to? Why/why not?
- If unsuccessful - Have you received feedback on why? Are you encouraged to make another application? Why/why not?
- Did you apply to ALL possible routes to maximise your chances? Did you discount any routes? If so, why? Will you re-apply?

- Have you ever rejected an offer of a training place? If so, why? Could anything have been done to make you take up this offer?
- Did anything get in the way of securing the place after you applied? Explore what.

School Direct (SD) applicants

- How did you come to know about School Direct?
- What motivated you to apply? (Why apply to SD)?
- What was the process of application like?
- How many places (schools) did you apply to for a School Direct place? Why? Were there any more you could have applied to?
- (If not already covered) Did you apply just to SD or to both SD and GTTR (UCAS)? Why?
- Did you choose the fee-based or salaried route? Why?
- What made you choose the schools you did? Explore unprompted, then ask about importance of the school's results/Ofsted, geography, and the training provider (e.g. does it matter whether Russell Group Uni?) Are they a teaching school and if so, how does this help?
- Are the others on your course fee-paying/salaried? What's your view on how your experience compares to theirs? And the support you are receiving/have received?
- Have you seen any press about Schools Direct? Was it good or bad? Has this impacted on your decision-making at all?

Funding

If not already covered:

- Explore what funding they received – grant/scholarship/bursary
- How crucial was this? What would they have done if they didn't get it (still applied?/not applied?)
- Explore who they see as having provided this funding
- Explore any decisions made as to which funding to go for (where they had a choice)
- Explore their awareness, take up and views of the following:
 - If you are in a school with more than 35% of Pupils on Free School Meals (FSM), you get a 25% uplift on your School Direct bursary or salaried grant.

Media context (Low priority but add if time. Most useful for those en-route, not yet on ITT)

- Have you seen/heard much about teaching through the media at present (TV/Press/radio etc -explore what)?
- What do you think about this?
- Will this impact on your decision-making going forwards at all?
- ***In particular, explore whether it affects what route they will take into teacher training/would have taken***
- Does this have any effect on your perception of teaching and enthusiasm towards becoming a teacher? (either positive or negative)

Wrap Up

- How can NCTL make the journey better for people like you? A) Up to application B) From application to when you started your training.
- If applicable: Could they improve anything in particular for career changers/people not straight out of uni such as yourself?
- If you had to describe your journey to teacher training (*if necessary*: so far) in one word, what would that be? (ENSURE YOU ASK THIS – FOR WORD CLOUD)
- Do you have anything else to add on the journey into teacher training that we have not covered today but that you think it may be useful for decision-makers to know about at NCTL/DfE? (Explore in depth)

Switch off audio and confirm this is switched off:

- Do you have any final questions about this research?
- Thank you very much for your time. Your feedback will be very important in helping plan support and advice offered to teaching candidates in future.

GET INTO TEACHING RESOURCE LIST

ONLINE RESOURCES

1. Website
2. Web chat
3. Regular e-mails from Teach First/Get into Teaching
4. Get into Teaching Facebook page
5. Get into Teaching twitter
6. Get into Teaching blog
7. Get into Teaching Youtube
8. Get into Teaching online event

FACE TO FACE SUPPORT AND EVENTS

9. Premier Plus: The School Experience Programme
10. Premier Plus: named Recruitment Advisors
11. Get into Teaching face-to-face event (such as Train to Teach)
12. Other careers or campus events that 'Get into Teaching' was attending

TELEPHONE AND HARD COPY SUPPORT

13. Teaching Line (telephone)
14. 'Ten Reasons' brochure (paper copy brochure)

GET INTO TEACHING ADVERTISING

15. Get into Teaching online advertising
16. Get into Teaching press (newspaper) advertising
17. Get into Teaching posters (London underground etc)

Appendix 2: Online groups topic guide

Welcome and Intros

- Welcome and thank you very much for taking the time to take part in this online group discussion – your views are very valuable to us! My name is (Moderator Name) and I will be your moderator, supported by (name of support) both from BMG Research.
- We'll give you a bit of background before we start.
- The National College for Teaching and Leadership has commissioned us at BMG Research to run a programme of research to explore and understand the journey that teaching candidates go on.
- We are particularly interested in your views and experiences from the point you became interested in teaching, to when you began teacher training.
- We will be discussing topics including your views and experiences of routes into teacher training; what guidance, advice and financial support was crucial to you beginning teacher training, any challenges and barriers encountered, and anything you felt was missing.
- The results from this web discussion will feed into a report which will help the NCTL to continually improve its communications, guidance and support for potential teaching candidates.
- The information gathered through this discussion will be confidential and individuals will not be identified in final reporting. The transcript will be used for analysis purposes only and will not be shared with anyone outside of BMG research. Quotes from the discussions may be used in the research report as a way of bringing the findings to life. However these quotes will not identify any individual. This is in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.
- Our discussion today will end no later than 7.30pm.
- There are no right or wrong answers: it's just your views and opinions that count.
- Please type in your responses and hit 'send' or return (no one sees what you write until you do this, but we may know you are writing). Don't worry if your response relates to a slightly earlier question – we'll either clarify with you or work this out – we know that some questions need pondering over and we'd rather you give us your feedback than not at all!
- A thank you payment will be made of £15 in high street shopping vouchers to all those who stay for the full session. This will be sent to you by post to the address you gave when we called you.
- Any questions about the research?

Practice – to familiarise respondents with the tools

(only use whiteboard now if needed later)

- Please watch for questions that will be directed to you in this box during the study.

- <Watching for Questions >
- You will be using the keyboard and your mouse and various tools at your disposal at the edge of the whiteboard to provide answers and opinions regarding a few topics.
- <Using the text box - Text Box Responses>
- Questions that appear in this box should be answered by typing into the smaller box below.
- <Using the Mouse + Tools - Responses>
- You will also be asked to do some exercises in the whiteboard. Let's practice with the tools!
- Please write your name by clicking on the A text tool and then type your first name or say Hi or Hello somewhere on the whiteboard.
- And then use the pencil tool to draw a circle round your name or what you have typed.
- Finally, click on the X tool and put a cross next to your name.
- Great work!
- <O.K. to disagree>
- You will see written responses of the other participants. If you see a response that sparks a thought of your own please feel free to comment. We do not expect everyone to agree. It is important to know your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing.
- Do not worry about spelling or grammar and finally, I hope you enjoy taking part in the Group!
- Ok – let's begin! Now for your first question...

Interest and motivation to do teacher training

- So how long has everyone been interested in teaching?
Who was always interested? Due to parents/family in teaching?
And what or who helped develop it at a later stage? When?
- Did anything/anyone/any organisation in particular spark your interest?
- I know some of the group came to teacher training as students, and others of you are 'career finders' (in the early stages of your career) or career changers (already had a different career). What made you all explore teaching?

Funding

- Did hearing about funding to train play any role in your decision to explore teaching?
- What funding was this? (Note to moderators: We are interested to know the impact of bursaries and scholarships in engaging people at this stage, and keeping them on their journey to training.)
- Did anyone receive a scholarship or bursary? Which?
- How crucial was this funding? Could you have applied without it? Would you have?
- Were you aware that if you are in a school with more than 35% of Pupils on Free School Meals (FSM), you get a 25% uplift on a School Direct bursary? Can everyone type in yes or no please here?
- Those who said no, would knowing about this have made a difference to your application? How? (Note to moderator- may have made someone apply to SD rather than GTTR, or to a particular school for example)
- Those who said Yes, did this have an impact on your application or the course/school or course provider you chose?

Appeal of teaching

- Overall, what were the most appealing aspects to you about teaching? (briefly)
- And any aspects that concerned or worried you at that early stage?

- How did you overcome those concerns/worries?
- (If not mentioned) Did anyone have any concerns about pupil behaviour? What concerns in particular?
- (If yes) How did you overcome those concerns/worries?
- Did anything else help you?
- What else motivated you to become a teacher?
- Anyone have any other comments about your motivation to become a teacher?

Appeal of teaching this particular subject

- Did you all study <insert subject> as your degree, or did any of you need to do an SKE (Subject Knowledge Enhancement) course?
- If applicable (needed to do SKE course) what made you pick <insert subject> to train to teach in, rather than your degree subject?

SHORTAGE GROUPS ONLY

- What do you see the term 'shortage subject' as meaning?
- Did knowing you were in a shortage subject impact on your decision to enter teaching? How?

Information. advice and guidance

- Where did you go for more information or advice in the initial stages? (before application)
- What was useful/not useful?
- What about in the later stages (application and post-application)?
- What materials did you see? What websites did you access? (If nothing) why not?
- Did you use the Teaching Information Line, or Teaching Line? (Moderator Note: Name change, but same telephone support line)
- Are there any specific topics you would have liked more advice on?
- How did you go about getting school experience? Did you all manage to get some?
- Was this process easy or difficult?
- Could anything else have helped? What might have helped?

What was missing, if anything?

- Thinking about your journey now, from your initial interest and explorations into teaching through to making your application and arrangements to begin the course, was any particular advice, guidance, help, encouragement or support missing along the way? Can everyone respond here – so if you cannot think of any please type 'nothing missing'.
- What was missing?
- Who from?
- Is there anything you think you would have benefited from specifically from the NCTL/Teaching Agency or Department for Education, that you did not receive?
- Those of you who weren't coming to this directly from doing your first degree, was there anything missing for people like you? (career finders and career changers)?
- Did anything you heard at any stage put you off teaching?
- What was it and where from?
- And how were you reassured?/ How do you feel about that now?

Application

How did you find the application process? I know some of you applied by School Direct and some via GTTR – so please type in SD or GTTR ahead of your reply. *(Note to moderator: Lower priority question – cut if no time.)*

- The NCTL is interested to learn more about why people apply when they do. *Can you all type in what month and year you applied, and then a little about why it was and what prompted you to apply then?*
- Do you feel that you were making an application late in the year?
- Did applying at this stage have any impact – what was this?
- Did you all get the course/place you wanted?
- Why/Why not?
- Could anything have helped you to apply earlier? What might have helped? Is there anything the NCTL/Teaching Agency/DfE could have done?

- Did anything make you consider dropping out at this stage?
- What was this?
- Did anything get in the way of securing the place after you applied?
- What was this?

- Those of you who did not apply to ALL possible routes - so you didn't apply to both school direct and GTTR, and within school direct you didn't apply to both fee paying and salaried, why was this? *(We think this applies to the majority of those in this group)/ (Note to moderator: Lower priority question – cut if no time)*

Wrap Up

- If you had to describe your journey to teacher training in one or two words, what would that word/those words be?

- Do you have anything else to add on the journey into teacher training that we have not covered today but that you think it may be useful for decision-makers to know about at NCTL/DfE?

- Do you have any final questions about this research before we close today?

- Thank you very much for your time. Your feedback will be very important in helping plan support and advice offered to teaching candidates in future.

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Career Changer. This is someone who agrees with the statement ‘I followed a different career path for a number of years, now looking to pursue a career in teaching’.

Career Finder. This is someone who agrees with the statement ‘I finished full-time studies more than a year ago but am still in the early stages of developing a career’.

FSM: Free School Meals

GTTR Route: The application route whereby a candidate applies through GTTR as opposed to School Direct (a separate portal in 2013). Within NCTL this route is now more commonly referred to as application to University-led or provider-led training.

Group A respondents: Took up a place on Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

Group B respondents: Not on ITT or experienced particular barriers on their journey. Two of Group B had dropped out before application; 29 had applied at some stage but had been unsuccessful, withdrawn their application or rejected an offer of a place.

Journey to Teacher Training: This was defined for the purposes of this research as being from initial interest in teaching to beginning teacher training.

Life-stage: For the purposes of this report, life-stage is defined whereby students are a full-time students or graduated in the last year, career finders finished full-time studies more than a year ago but are still in the early stages of developing a career and career finders followed a different career path for a number of years, and are now looking to pursue a career in teaching.

MFL: Modern Foreign languages

SD: Abbreviation for School Direct.

SKE: Subject Knowledge Enhancement course

Student: This is someone who agrees with the statement ‘I am a full-time student or graduated in the last year’.

Webchat: Online Q&A with Get into Teaching advisors.

Appendix 4: Statement of Compliance

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012).

Interpretation and publication of results

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

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Reference: DFE- RR380A

ISBN: 978-1-78105-412-3

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