



The impact of the ECF
programme on the work
engagement, wellbeing and
retention of teachers: a
longitudinal study 2021-2026

Interim Research
Report



Contents

Executive summary	3
Research Purpose	3
Research Methodology	3
The ECT and Mentor Survey 2021.....	3
Emerging Research Findings	4
Next Steps	4
Full Report	5
Purpose of the research.....	5
Participant Demographics.....	5
Representativeness of our sample	5
ECF Programme experience.....	7
Positive contribution of mentor support to learning.....	7
Mastery and use of learning on ECF programme	7
Teacher retention	8
Destinations	8
Withdrawn and Deferred participants.....	10
Destination and demographics	12
Summary	12
Next Steps	13

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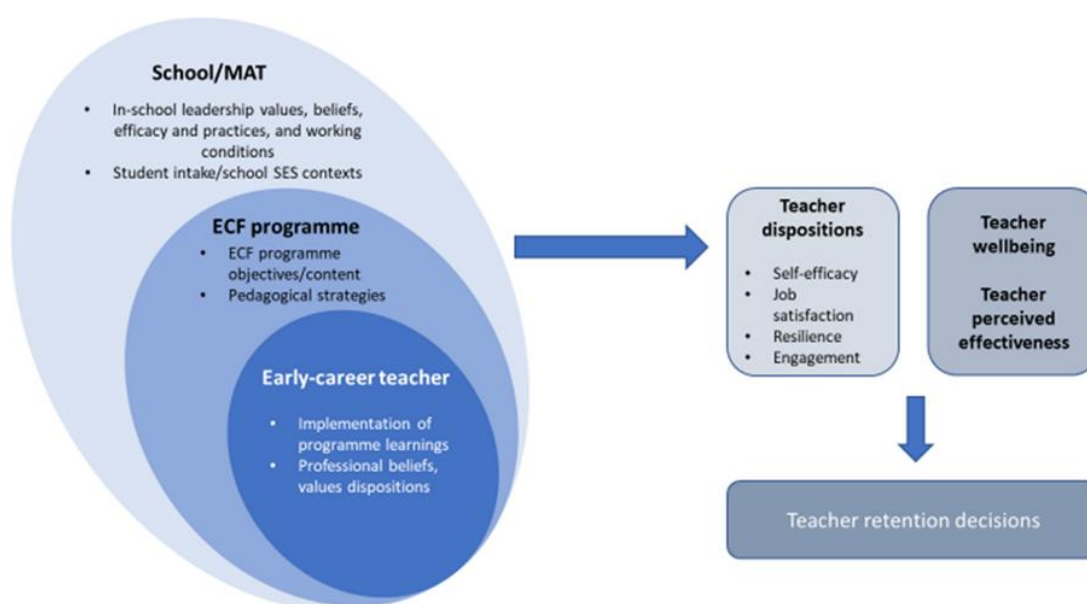
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Executive summary

Research Purpose

Research is an integral part of the UCL-led Early Career Framework (ECF) programme. The purpose of this research is to fill an important evidence gap on the impact of related **programme-level**, **school-level**, and **system-level** factors on the professional capabilities, wellbeing, and retention decisions of early career teachers (ECTs) and their mentors over time. This mixed methods research will provide robust evidence to enable us to understand:

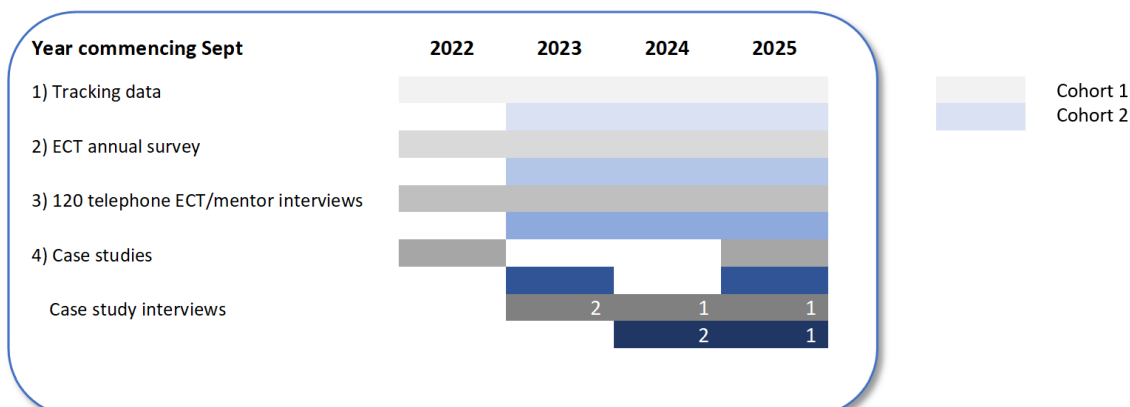
- **Who** the intended leavers, movers and stayers are over time.
- **The extent to which** and **how** their experiences on ECF programmes have influenced their professional dispositions and qualities, **how effective** they perceive themselves as teachers, and **why** they intend to leave, move (schools), or stay (in teaching).



This report documents emerging findings from the initial ECT and mentor survey and is the first of a series of research reports and briefings that we will produce from this study.

Research Methodology

There are four core elements to the ECF programme research.



The survey investigation explored ECTs' and their mentors' ECF programme experience – especially regarding *mastery* and *use* of their learning in context; the organisational conditions and culture of their schools; and their professional dispositions, wellbeing and retention trajectories.

All ECTs and mentors registered on the two-year UCL ECF programme ($\approx 12,000$) were invited to participate in the end of Year 1 survey and more than 1,700 responded between June and October 2022 – a response rate of 14%. The sample appears representative of national ECT and mentor populations for gender, ethnicity, school phase, and contract type – which gives us confidence about the relevance of our ECTs' and mentors' learning and career experiences to their peers nationally.

Our ECF programme has engaged a greater proportion of schools with more than the national average of pupils receiving free school meals (22.5%), and ECTs with older age profiles (mostly career changers) – with 38% aged 30 and older, compared to 27% in the national ECT population.

Emerging Research Findings

- **96%** of ECTs and mentors were intending to remain in teaching next year. This appears to be higher than the most recent national retention statistics indicating that 87.5% of teachers who qualified in 2020 (under the previous statutory guidance) were still teaching one year later.
- Most ECTs intended to stay in the same school the following year (761, 84%), but a greater proportion of ECTs (109, 12%) than mentors (35, 4%) intended to move schools next academic year. Almost all mentors reported that they were staying in the same school (742, 92%), with 94 (12%) having been promoted to a higher level of responsibility.
- **Structured mentor meetings** were the most valued strategy contributing to ECT learning.
- The vast majority of ECTs agreed that the ECF programme was based on sound research about teaching or pupil learning ($n=788$, 87%), and that the practice suggested on the ECF programme would make a difference to the learning of their pupils ($n=745$, 82%). Importantly, around 1 in 5 ECTs had *used* their learning in context significantly.
- More than 70% of ECTs felt confident (ranging from 'confident' to 'completely confident') in relation to what they had learned on programme against each of the eight Teachers' Standards, with close to 80% reporting that they were confident about **setting high expectations**, and **planning and teaching well-structured lessons**. The Standard which the fewest ECTs in our sample were confident in demonstrating – albeit still above 70% – was **good curriculum knowledge**. However, as some ECTs had commented, the reported confidence could not be entirely attributed to the ECF programme.

Next Steps

Further statistical analyses of the survey and qualitative interviews and case studies will investigate, in detail, how different individual, school and systems factors interact to influence ECTs' and mentors' wellbeing, career trajectories and retention destinations over time.

Full Report

We are grateful to all UCL Delivery Partners for their support of this research. This interim report provides an update on the progress of the research and some key findings relating to early career teachers' (ECTs) and mentors' satisfaction with their learning experiences on the ECF programme.

Purpose of the research

To enable us to fill an important evidence gap on the impact of related **programme-level, school-level, and system-level** factors on the professional capabilities, wellbeing, and retention decisions of early career teachers and their mentors over time.

Participant Demographics

Invitations to complete research surveys were sent between July and October 2022 to all ECTs and mentors on the UCL ECF programme. A total of 904 ECTs from 684 schools and 810 mentors from 634 schools responded.

Table 1. Survey response rates

Population*	Mentors N=5853	ECTs main survey n=4144	ECTs sub- sample** n=2000	ECTs total N=6144	Total ECTs & Mentors 11997
Response	810	617	287	904	1714
Response rate	14%	15%	14%	15%	14%

Representativeness of our sample

Participant demographics of our sample appear to be broadly representative of national figures for ECTs and mentors regarding gender, ethnicity, and contract types (e.g. full time permanent) (Table 2). Representation of school phase in our sample is also broadly in line with the national distribution (Table 3). This means we can be **fairly confident about the external validity of the research findings** in that **they are highly relevant to the experiences of the ECT and mentor populations nationally**.

The age profiles of ECTs in our sample are much older than the ECTs nationally – with 38% aged 30 and older, compared to 27% in the national ECT population. This evidence suggests that there are more **career changers** amongst our survey respondents compared with the national ECT population. Almost half of ECTs in our sample (48%) had a job elsewhere before entering teaching, with 161 (44%) ECTs in primary school and more than half of secondary ECTs (252, 51%) reporting that they were career changers.

With regard to free school meal (FSM) eligibility, the DfE data shows that 22.5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals in 2021-2 nationally. The majority of primary and secondary schools (64%) in England report 0-25% of pupils eligible for free school meals (quartile 1) – which is broadly in line with the proportion of schools where our ECTs work. However, more disadvantaged quartile 2 schools (i.e. 25-50% of pupils eligible for free school meals) appear to be over-represented in our sample – for both ECTs and mentors. Put differently, **our ECF programme has engaged a greater proportion of schools with more than the national average of pupils receiving free school meals**. This should be treated with caution as a large proportion of national data is unknown and we will examine this further comparing our sample profile to that of the total UCL cohort.

Table 2. Participant demographics

	ECTs	ECTs national**1	Mentors	Mentors National**1
Gender	675 (75%) female	17231 (75%) female	630 (78%) female	18574 (75%) female
Ethnicity	715 (79%) white	16543 (75%) white	693 (85%) white	20281 (86%) white
Age Range	21-65		23-65	
Mean (SD)	30.9 (9.0)		39.9 (9.2)	
21-29	558 (62%)	16140 (73%)	114 (14%)	4464 (18%)
30-39	188 (21%)	3759 (17%)	313 (39%)	10175 (41%)
40-49	101 (11%)	1694 (7.7%)	223 (28%)	6732 (27%)
50-59	43 (5%)	493 (2.2%)	140 (17%)	2987 (12%)
60-69	18 (<1%)	22 (<1%)	18 (2.2%)	253 (1)

*Percentage of population where data is known (gender 86%, ethnicity 82%, age 82%)

Table 3. Additional participant information

		ECTs	ECTs national**	Mentors	Mentors national**
School type	Secondary	492 (54%)	13837 (52%)	407 (50%)	13069 (52%)
	Middle	4 (<1%)		1 (<1%)	
	Primary	369 (41%)	11856 (44%)	345 (43%)	10755 (43%)
	Other	39 (4%)	1124 (4%)	57 (7%)	1071 (4%)
Teaching is first career		473 (52%)		549 (68%)	
Educated to Master's level		154 (17%)		186 (23%)	
Contract type	Full time permanent	705 (78%)	All full time 20809 (77%)	672 (83%)	All full time 20165 (81%)
	Full time fixed term/temporary	165 (18.3%)		5 (<1%)	
	Part time permanent	21 (2.3%)	All part time 1069 (4%)	127 (15.7%)	All part-time 3668 (15%)
	Part time fixed term/temporary	13 (1.4%)		6 (<1%)	
		% per FSM quartile where FSM is known 854 (94%)		% per FSM quartile where FSM is known 788 (97%)	National % schools per quartile where FSM known 24070 (80%)***
Free school meal quartiles	Quartile 1: 0-25%	539 (63%)		474 (60%)	15440 (64%)
	Quartile 2: 25-50%	280 (33%)		273 (35%)	6878 (29%)
	Quartile 3: 50-75%	34 (3.8%)		41 (5%)	1652 (7%)
	Quartile 4: 75-100%	1 (<1%)		0	100 (<1%)
	Missing/unavailable	50 (5.6% total)		22 (2.7% total)	5870 (20% total)

ECF Programme experience

Our survey has asked ECTs about their experiences of the programme, including which elements they felt most useful, programme satisfaction, mastery of their learning on the programme, and how well they have implemented their learning.

Positive contribution of mentor support to learning

ECTs in our sample reported clearly that the strategy that contributed most to their learning was the **structured mentor meetings** (Figure 1)

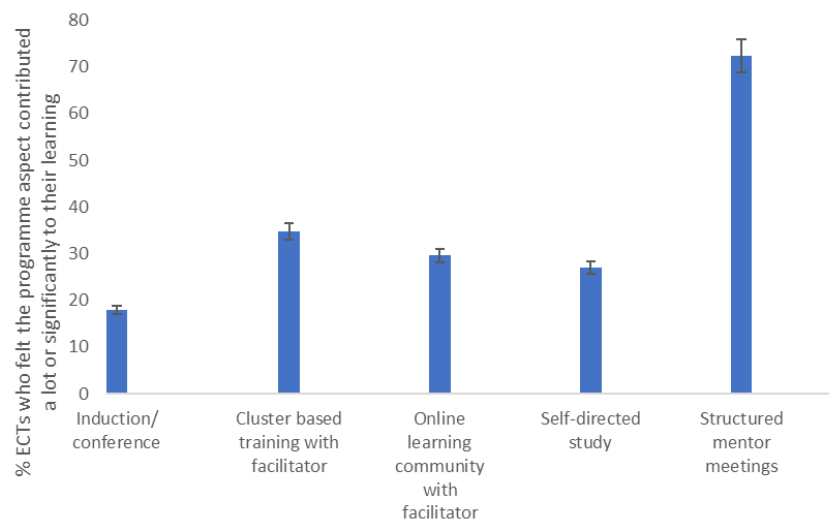


Fig 1. ECTs perceptions of contribution of programme elements to learning

Comments from ECTs, alongside the quantitative survey data, highlight how important the role of the mentor is in ECTs' learning:

'It was so helpful just to have a mentor to talk things over with! Especially one who is clued up on research and resources.'

'Training sessions and mentor meetings have been invaluable in my progress this year.'

'I have really appreciated the mentor meetings and I like the online meetings as they are helpful.'

'My mentor has been instrumental in my induction.'

Mastery and use of learning on ECF programme

Of our sample, 745 (82%) agreed that the practice suggested on the ECF programme will make a difference to the learning of their pupils, with 52% agreeing strongly or moderately.

A large majority of 788 (87%) of ECTs agreed the ECF programme was based on sound research about teaching or pupil learning, with 85% feeling clear about the theories that inform practice on the programme.

More than 70% of ECTs in the sample felt either confident, very confident, or completely confident in relation to what they had learned on programme against the Teachers' Standards (Figure 2). There was not a significant difference in this response across the Standards, suggesting that such positive confidence level applies to all Standards. Close to 80% reported that they were confident about **setting high expectations**, and **planning and teaching well-structured lessons**. The Standard which the fewest ECTs in our sample were confident in demonstrating – albeit still above 70% – was **good curriculum knowledge**. However, as some ECTs had commented, the reported confidence was not entirely due to the programme. We will explore variation in this through further modelling and qualitative interviews.

It is most encouraging to note that a majority of ECTs (70-75%) felt they had **used their learning** in their practice either moderately, a lot, or significantly, with around 1 in 5 (between 18-22%) rating significantly.

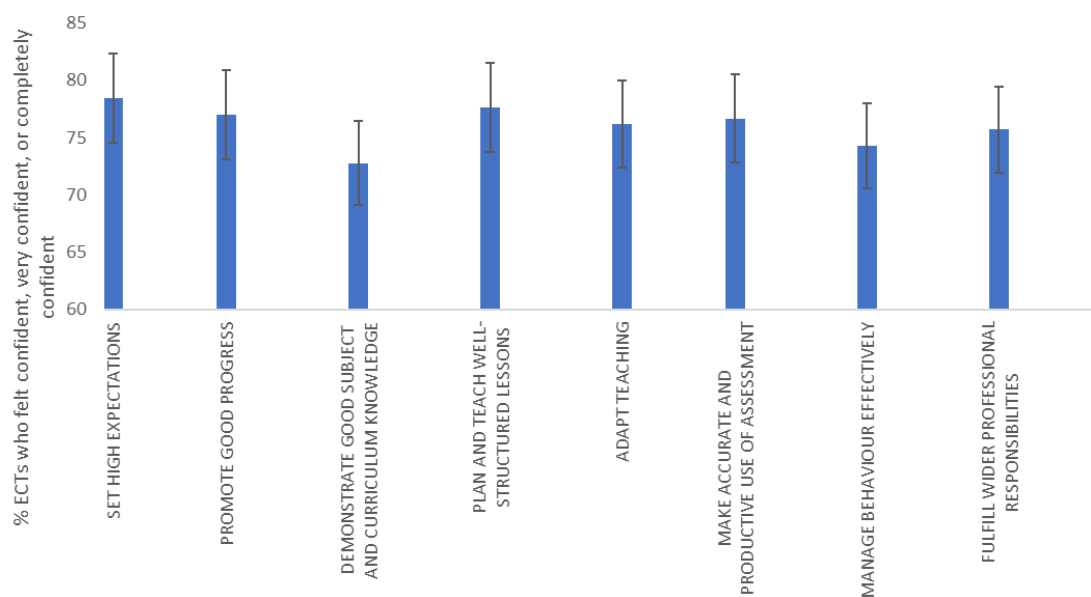


Fig.2 Confidence of ECTs in mastery of programme content

Teacher retention

Destinations

Around two thirds of ECTs (66.9%) indicated that they would be **staying in the same school in the same role**, compared to a relatively higher proportion of mentors 73.8% who reported the same intention (Figure 3).

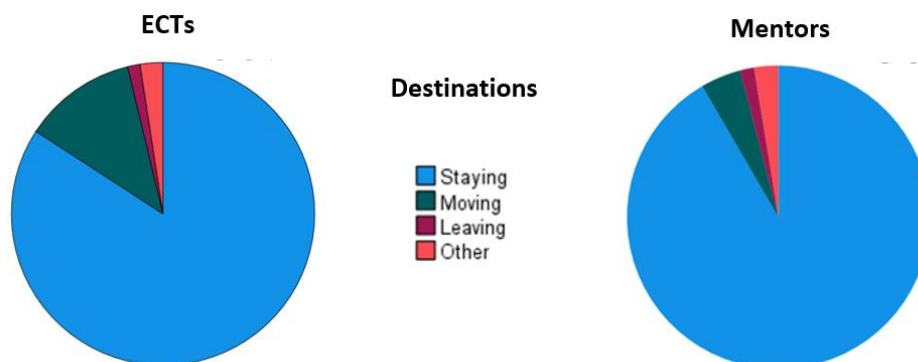


Fig. 3 Indicated destinations of ECTs and mentors for the next academic year

Our survey suggests that **almost all ECTs and mentors have decided to stay in teaching** (Figures 4 and 5). Only 1.3% of ECTs and 1.5% of mentors in the sample indicated that they were leaving teaching, with an additional 2.4% of ECTs and 2.6% of mentors indicating other options such as temporary withdrawal. Approximately **96%** of ECTs indicated they were remaining in service the next academic year (2022/23). In comparison, the most recent national figures indicate 87.5% of teachers who qualified in 2020 (under the previous statutory guidance) were still teaching one year later.²

In our sample most ECTs intended to stay in the same school the following year (761, 84%), but a greater proportion of ECTs (109, 12%) than mentors (35, 4%) intended to move schools next academic year. Almost all mentors reported that they were staying in the same school (742, 92%), with 94 (12%) having been promoted to a higher level of responsibility (Figure 5).

ECTs

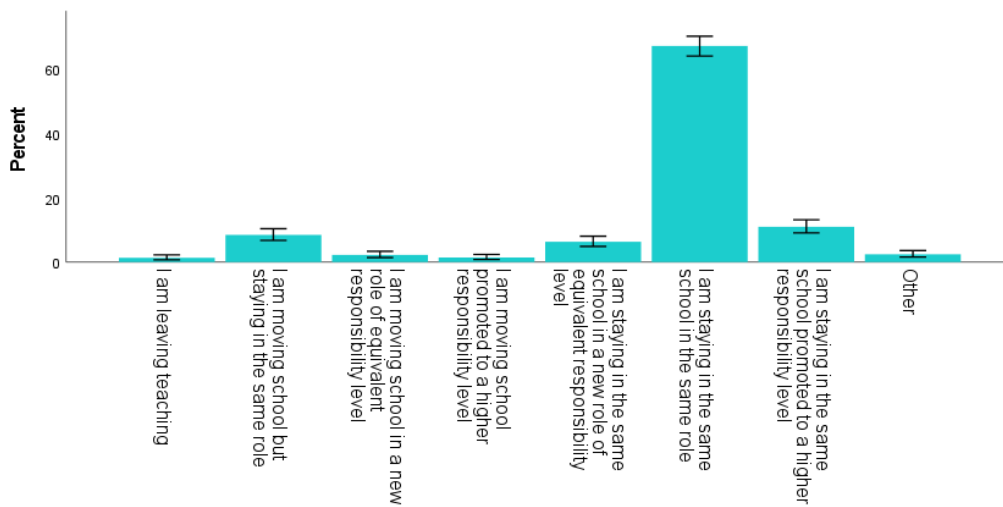


Fig.4 ECT indicated destination for next academic year detailed

Mentors

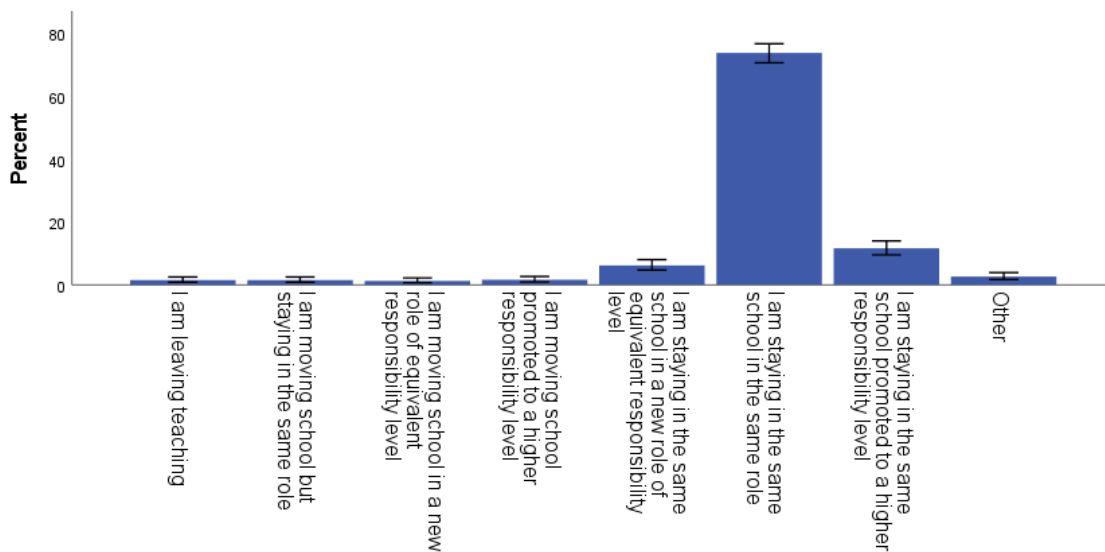


Fig.5 Mentor indicated destination for next academic year detailed

Withdrawn and Deferred participants

Table 4 presents a breakdown of the total sample of participants in the ECF dataset by training status (Active, Withdrawn and Deferred). Panel A corresponds to participant data retrieved in June 2022 and Panel B corresponds to participant data retrieved in November 2022.

It appears that 422 (6%) of ECTs from Cohort 1 have withdrawn from the start of their programme up to November 2022, although 183 (3% of the June 2022 total) of these had already withdrawn by the point of data collection in June 2022. Considering the ‘destinations’ figures above, we are fairly confident in concluding that the **3.7% of ECTs with an intention of withdrawing temporarily or leaving teaching is a good indication of the actual figures** who withdrew/left between June and November 2022 from the UCL-led ECF programme across all Delivery Partners.

Table 4. Participant sample in ECF report by training status

Panel A: June 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Training status	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total Mentor sample
active	6144	94 %	5853	88 %
deferred	192	3 %	500	8 %
withdrawn	183	3 %	266	4 %
Total sample	6519	100 %	6619	100 %
Panel B: November 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Training status	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total Mentor sample
active	6303	88 %	6098	81 %
deferred	414	6 %	1065	14 %
withdrawn	422	6 %	341	5 %
Total sample	7139	100 %	7504	100 %

Table 5 presents a breakdown of withdrawn reasons that participants provided. Panel A corresponds to participant data retrieved in June 2022 and Panel B corresponds to participant data retrieved in November 2022. The reasons for mentors withdrawing from the ECF programme is consistent between June and November 2022 – with ‘no longer being a mentor’ cited as the most common reason. Moving to a different school was the most common reason for ECTs to withdraw from the ECF programme in November 2022. Of the ECTs who answered ‘other’ as a destination in our sample, the most common reason (4, 18%) was leaving to do supply teaching. For mentors who answered ‘other’ the most common reason was a change in role (5, 24%).

Table 6 presents a breakdown of deferred reasons provided by participants. Panel A corresponds to participant data retrieved in June 2022 and Panel B corresponds to participant data retrieved in November 2022.

Table 5. Summary of reasons for withdrawn participants

Panel A: June 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Withdrawn reason	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total Mentor sample
Left teaching profession	41	0.6 %	1	0.0 %
Mentor no longer being mentor	4	0.1 %	181	2.7 %
Moved school	27	0.4 %	4	0.1 %
Other	71	1.1 %	32	0.5 %
School left full induction programme (FIP)	13	0.2 %	9	0.1 %
No reason provided	27	0.4 %	39	0.6 %
Panel B: November 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Withdrawn reason	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total Mentor sample
Left teaching profession	48	0.7 %	1	0.0 %
Mentor no longer being mentor	3	0.0 %	201	2.7 %
Moved school	226	3.2 %	12	0.2 %
Other	70	1.0 %	37	0.5 %
School left FIP	18	0.3 %	13	0.2 %
No reason provided	57	0.8 %	77	1.0 %

Table 6. Summary of reasons for deferred participants

Panel A: June 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Deferred reason	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total mentor sample
Bereavement	0	0.0 %	1	0.0 %
Career break	18	0.3 %	6	0.1 %
Long term sickness	19	0.3 %	13	0.2 %
Other	138	2.1 %	450	6.8 %
Parental leave	13	0.2 %	29	0.4 %
No reason provided	4	0.1 %	1	0.0 %
Panel B: November 2022				
	ECT		Mentor	
Deferred reason	count	% of total ECT sample	count	% of total mentor sample
Career break	47	0.7 %	12	0.2 %
Long term sickness	18	0.3 %	17	0.2 %
Other	301	4.2 %	922	12.3 %
Parental leave	25	0.4 %	42	0.6 %
No reason provided	23	0.3 %	72	1.0 %

Destination and demographics

Our results suggest that there are no significant differences between Delivery Partners (DP) in whether ECTs or mentors decide to stay in or leave teaching. Moreover, we did not observe any regional differences in ECT or mentor destinations (Figure 6). These results suggest that ECTs and mentors were not more likely to leave, move, or stay according to region or DPs.

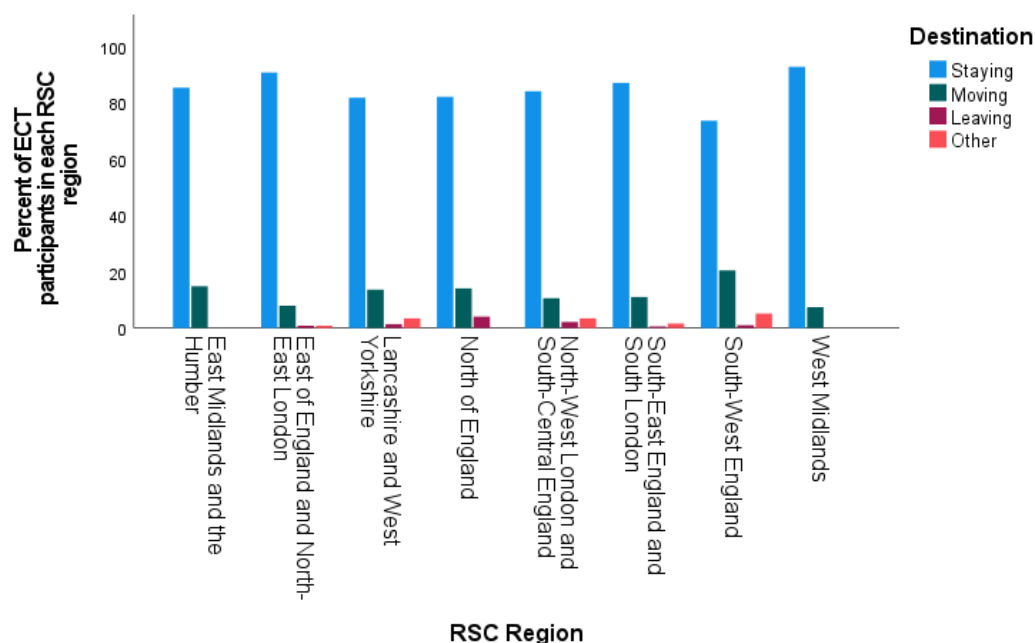


Fig.6 ECT destinations percentage by region

Our survey conducted at the end of the first year of the two-year ECF programme indicates that ECTs' or mentors' retention decisions were not associated with their **gender**, **ethnicity** or the **Free School Meal (FSM) quartile** profiles of their schools. However, this may be related to the low ECT/mentor movement in the first year. We will track the movement over time.

Age group (decade) was not associated with retention decisions ($p=.970$) for ECTs, though **age group** was significantly associated with retention decisions in mentors ($p=.020$). The age category most likely to *move* was mentors in the age group 50-59, although this was a small number in our sample at five people (3.6% of teachers in that age category). This will be explored further through more detailed modelling.

Summary

Our sample of ECTs and mentors indicated that the majority were intending to stay in teaching the following academic year, although a greater proportion of ECTs than mentors intended to move schools and there appear to be differences across delivery partner groups, although not between regions overall. This will be explored further in our longitudinal study as we track teacher retention trajectories over time.

The positive news is that our sample appears to be comparable to the national distribution of ECTs – which gives us the confidence about the relevance of our research findings in relation to the ECTs and mentors across the country.

Our sample appears to have a slightly greater representation of schools in the lower two quartiles of Free School Meals than national data. FSM status of schools did not appear to be associated with retention decisions in our sample.

The vast majority of ECTs and mentors are satisfied with their learning experiences. It is particularly encouraging to note that more than 80% of ECTs reported that the practice they had developed through participating in the ECF programme was likely to make a difference to their pupils' learning. Moreover, around 1 in 5 had *used* their learning in context significantly.

Next Steps

These initial findings must be considered in context: the numbers of teachers leaving teaching is very small, and we are considering these factors independently in this initial analysis. Detailed modelling of how factors interact to influence teacher retention pathways will be undertaken to track decision making over time. Our next round of surveys will be issued to Cohort 1 Year 2 (2021 start) and Cohort 2 Year 1 (2022 start) in Summer 2023.

Our next report for delivery partners will provide a descriptive summary of ECT and mentors perceptions of school organisation and culture, and their resilience, self-efficacy, wellbeing, and job satisfaction.

We will also embark on the qualitative aspect of our research, which will provide important context and nuance to our understanding of teacher retention pathways. The qualitative comments we received in the surveys will help to guide the development of this aspect of the project, and we look forward to discussing this aspect with Delivery Partner colleagues moving forward. We will be inviting participants to take part in interviews in the Spring, and schools to participate in our case studies. We are very grateful for the continued support of our delivery partner colleagues and welcome any feedback and suggestions for the next stage of our research.

Endnote:

* Data may be subject to change as the database building process is finalised.

**The sub-sample survey was a random sub-sample of 2000 ECTs who were asked in more detail about aspects of learning on the programme.

***Totals include state-funded nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools and pupil referral units

¹Department for Education, Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs Academic Year 2021-22, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/teacher-and-leader-development-ecf-and-npqs/2021-22#dataBlock-f9ae841b-23e2-48f5-41b0-08da58131405-tables>

²Department for Education, Get Information About Schools, <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Search/PrepareDownload?tok=1MqRa7Xr>

³ Department for Education, School Workforce in England Reporting Year 2021, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>