

### **Alpha TSH Case Study: Sharing the Mentor Load for ITT**

**Rationale:** To provide a response to growing concerns about capacity in schools to simultaneously host ITT placements and employ ECTs following changes to ECT induction (2021) and impending changes to ITT mentor training requirements (2024). Both changes place a considerable burden on schools in relation to mentor capacity; this is especially impactful in smaller primary schools.

A group of schools facing resource constraints but committed to consistent, high-quality teacher training collaborated to pool expertise. An experienced mentor, renowned for their proficiency in delivering Core Content for Initial Teacher Training, was chosen to navigate this collaborative effort.

An innovative approach was implemented through sharing the 'Expert Mentor' across multiple schools to deliver the Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework to trainees and ECTs across the schools. This case study explores the challenges, benefits, and outcomes of this unique mentorship program. It aims to maintain and support local primary and secondary capacity for ITT placements and ECT employment through piloting of a model for Expert Mentor/s in clusters of schools within similar geographical areas. Evaluation of the pilot and sustainability modelling will provide a potential model to use in 2024 and beyond.

**The Model:** An Expert Mentor chosen to work across a cluster of schools in the same geographical region to provide additional capacity and expertise for existing ITT/ECT mentors.

For example, to support in delivery of elements of the CCF for trainees and act as point of reference for mentors on application of CCF & ECF to delivery and practise. Equally, an Expert Mentor might provide additional capacity for observations and mentor meetings ECTs and take a role in supporting an ITT trainee in the classroom (releasing the class-teacher for ITT mentor training, for example).

Suitable adaptations to the model should be agreed by participating schools according to context, resources available and numbers of trainees/ECTs. Use of directed time and CPD time could support reduction of costs in some cases.

**Implementation:** The selected mentor conducted training sessions across participating schools, delivering the core content framework. This approach aimed to enhance collaboration among schools, foster a sense of community, and provide trainees with exposure to diverse teaching methodologies.

The ultimate intention is to support the capacity of schools to continue to offer ITT placements and ECT employment and to benefit from the developments in evidence-based practice. Improved stability and availability of ITT placements will directly benefit the 'pipeline' of available teachers in the area and continuity between CCF & ECF will support ECTs joining the profession.

A successful pilot, fully evaluated and refined, could create a sustainable model for other schools to adapt and adopt within their settings, further increasing placement capacity in the local area.

#### **Challenges:**

1. Logistics: Coordinating schedules and logistics across multiple schools can take time to agree, requiring careful planning and communication. A clear agreement between participating schools should be in place and mitigation planned for in the case of staff absences within the Expert Mentor and ITT Mentors group.



2. Curriculum Alignment: Ensuring that content aligns with each school's specific ITT provider/s curriculum and teaching philosophy requires ongoing collaboration between the Expert Mentor, ITT providers and school leaders. (Although the Core Content Framework is standardised across all providers). To mitigate the issue of teaching philosophy and 'knowing the trainees' schools should allocate an in-school mentor (with reduced mentoring time to 30 mins per week, for example).

**Benefits to participating schools:**

1. Shared Expertise: Schools benefited from the Expert Mentor's wealth of experience, gaining insights into effective teaching strategies, innovative pedagogies, and best practices.
2. Cost Efficiency: Sharing an Expert Mentor across schools helped mitigate the financial burden of hiring individual experts for each institution.
3. Professional Development: Teachers and trainees had the opportunity to engage in continuous professional development, enhancing their skills and knowledge.

Anticipated benefit for schools choosing to participate is an increase in mentor capacity, support and skills in delivering the new (2021) ECT induction requirements and to reduce the burden on schools when releasing mentors for additional training requirements of ITT (from 2024 onwards).

**Outcomes:**

1. Improved Teaching Practices: The Expert Mentor's guidance led to the adoption of innovative teaching practices, positively impacting classroom instruction.
2. Enhanced Collaboration: The cross-school mentorship fostered collaboration among educators, creating a supportive network for sharing resources and ideas; especially valuable for schools operating outside Trusts.
3. Positive Student Impact: The improved teaching practices translated into positive outcomes for students, with increased engagement and academic achievement.

**Conclusion:**

This case study illustrates the success of a collaborative approach to initial teacher training and teacher induction through sharing an Expert Mentor across schools. Despite initial challenges, the benefits of shared expertise, cost efficiency, and enhanced collaboration resulted in improved teaching practices and positive outcomes for both educators and students. This model offers a viable solution for schools seeking to optimize resources and elevate the quality of teacher training programs.

***If you would like to find out more, please contact [storr@alphatsh.org](mailto:storr@alphatsh.org)***