

Report title: Closure of Essex Teacher Training Programme	
Report to: Councillor Tony Ball - Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	
Report author: Clare Kershaw, Director of Education	
Date: 21 July 2022	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Essex County Council (ECC) has set out a clear Vision for Essex and we want to be a county where innovation brings prosperity. To achieve this vision, we need to work in new ways with partners in the public and private sectors, the voluntary and community sector, and with individuals, families, and communities. We must approach the challenges we face with creativity and innovation if we are to secure the outcomes we desire.

Part of that vision is to ensure that children in Essex get the best start in life and ensuring a good education for all Essex children in all types of schools within the County. To help meet that vision it is essential that Essex supports our schools to support recruitment and retention by training high quality teachers. The current service offer was judged inadequate by Ofsted judgement in February 2022 and therefore does not meet the ECC ambition of training high quality teachers, and therefore ensuring a good education for Essex children. There are a number of high quality providers within Essex who are able to provide a high quality provision to meet our vision and these are supported by the recommendations in this report.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Agree that ECC does not seek to renew the Department for Education (DfE) accreditation for ECC to continue to be a teacher training provider from September 2024.
- 2.2 Agree to close Initial Teacher Training programme by September 2022

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Essex Teacher Training, provided by ECC, is a large provider of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in the Eastern Region. ITT allows ECC to train teachers so that they qualify for qualified teacher status. This can be delivered by a school direct programme or a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). It works in partnership with Teaching School Hubs, Multi-Academy Trusts, and individual schools to offer school-based routes into teaching through School Direct and School Centred Initial Teacher Training provision.

- 3.2** ECC has been an ITT provider for a number of years, it transferred into the education portfolio following the sale of Essex Education Services. This report seeks authority to close the programme by September 2022.
- 3.3** The ITT school direct programme is a school-led route into initial teacher training where teachers train in a school setting and are supported by training that ECC run. It is run through partnership between a lead school (for example a multi academy trust), other schools, and ECC as an accredited teacher training provider. Training places are allocated to the lead school on behalf of the partnership, typically for one year.
- 3.4** The ITT School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provision is accredited by the Department for Education to run courses which lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In addition, training in some SCITT consortia can also lead to the award of a PGCE (validated by a higher education institution). The principal advantage of a SCITT course is that it offers full-time 'hands on' training in at least two high quality schools, a personal mentor and exposure to the classroom environment virtually from day one of the course. The SCITT Consortium provides all aspects of the course, including academic assessment, classroom observations, development of subject knowledge, delivery of theory and trainee support. External examiners and, if necessary, outside lecturers may be brought in to enhance the course provision.
- 3.5** The Essex Teacher Training programme works with schools in Essex, East Hertfordshire, South Suffolk, Kent, and London boroughs. Training is offered in primary, secondary, and special schools. It offers a partnership model which is flexible and rooted in the values of collaboration which is not a typical model across other providers in the region. All schools are involved in the recruitment process and they value being able to interview prospective candidates and being part of the decision-making process. Working in collaboration in this way and adopting different models of support for different partnerships enables us to respond to the local needs of the school.
- 3.6** The programme currently works with 11 different Lead School partnerships for school direct, alongside a smaller number of schools for SCITT placements only. The total number of schools currently involved in the programme is 63 of these 40 are in the boundaries of Essex County Council. There are also an additional 38 schools offering 6 week placements for our trainees, of these 16 are within the boundaries of Essex County Council. Some of these schools are in deprived areas and the variety of routes into teaching offered are key to the recruitment and retention strategies for these areas
- 3.7** In total, there were 130 trainees registered on the programme for 2021/22, 74 in primary schools, 65 in secondary schools, 3 in all through schools and 4 in special schools. There are 65 trainees in the boundaries of Essex County Council, of these 42 are in primary schools, 19 are in secondary schools, 1 is an all through school and 3 are in special schools. All trainee placements are due to be completed by 30 July 2022.

- 3.8** In Autumn 2021 ECC commissioned a review of its ITT provision by an appointed strategic leadership consultant and an independent ITT subject matter expert. This was linked to the length of time since the last Ofsted inspection and the changes in the published Ofsted framework in December 2020 alongside the new quality marks introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) linked to the finalised market review published in December 2021. The purpose of the review was to support the self-evaluation process in preparation for a re-accreditation bid. The overall finding of the review indicated a judgement of “Requires Improvement” at best given the significant amount of work needed to meet the new quality criteria given in the draft ITT criteria for 2024/25. Strengths and areas for development were identified in the key judgement areas of Education and Training, and Leadership and Management along with several recommended key issues. As a result of the external review the ITT Self Evaluation Form (SEF) was updated along with an improvement plan to address the areas of development.
- 3.9** The ITT provision was inspected by Ofsted from 7 February 2022 to 10 February 2022. A judgement of “inadequate” was made and key issues mirror those identified by the external review. The Ofsted report has been published and is now available to the public.
- 3.10** Since the Ofsted inspection a meeting has been held between the Director of Education and the ITT programme leadership team to outline expectations. As a result, ECC prepared a rapid improvement plan to address the key issues from both the external review and the Ofsted inspection. A communications plan has been compiled to address concerns from stakeholders relating to the provision of our current and future trainees.
- 3.11** An Improvement Board (IB) was set up on 9 March 2022 following the Ofsted inspection to oversee the improvement work required. It consists of members from the Education Directorate, HR, Finance, the higher education institute, Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and the ITT executive board. The IB has assessed that the speed by which the required improvement work is needed will not be achieved by the next academic year and therefore the ITT provision is very unlikely to secure a judgement of good at its re-inspection early next year. We are therefore unable to guarantee the quality of the provision going forward, and that is not an acceptable position to be in.
- 3.12** The only available window to submit an application for reaccreditation of our ITT programme from September 2024 was May 2022. ECC used the same consultants who carried out the external review, one of whom is a subject matter expert in the ITT arena to assess how likely the provision would meet the threshold for re-accreditation. The information presented was considered by the IB who unanimously recommended on 28 March 2022 that the provision did not apply to the DfE for reaccreditation in May 2022. This is because the work needed to demonstrate that we are meeting the required standards could not be achieved within the timescales. This decision was ratified by the Director of Education on 8 April 2022 and shared with members of the IB on 20 April 2022. This means that under DfE regulations, the ITT provision would naturally cease in the summer 2024.

3.13 In addition, the IB have considered the financial viability of the ITT programme based on recruitment numbers. To date 36 trainees have applied for a place from September 2022. Recruitment was paused pending the publication of the Ofsted outcome as we feel we cannot recruit to the provision knowing the quality has been judged inadequate by Ofsted which is yet to be published in the public domain. Recruitment numbers nationally are on a decline and that is mirrored in the number of applications received to date. We anticipate that once the Ofsted report is published there will be a further decline in applications. The provision needs 93 trainees for it to be financially viable. Financial scenario planning indicates that if the programme recruited 50% of its current cohort which equates to 65 trainees it is predicted to run at a deficit of approximately £107,000. If the decision to close the provision for 2022-23 is taken we will be working with the 36 trainees and the schools employing them to transfer them to other high quality providers of their choice. A redundancy consultation with the staff delivering the ITT programme has been undertaken to reflect the current situation, and we are working to keep redundancies to a minimum.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1** This report links to the following aim in the Essex Vision: Provide an equal foundation for every child.
- 4.2** Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030: It is anticipated there will be no demonstrable impact in this area.
- 4.3** This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex': A good place for children and families to grow.

5. Options

5.1 Option 1 (recommended) To discontinue the offer of Initial Teacher Training (ITT), through the Essex Teacher Training (ETT) provision as of the 2022-23 academic year.

- 5.1.1** The quality of the provision is inadequate as judged by Ofsted and is unlikely to secure a judgement of good at its next inspection, this has the potential to create reputational risk to the council.
- 5.1.2** It is predicted that based on recruitment numbers and of those nationally the programme is at risk of not being financially viable therefore closure would mitigate any financial risk.
- 5.1.3** This is not a statutory service for the Council and there is capacity in the wider system through the teaching school hubs to deliver ITT provision. Closure of the programme will not significantly impact on our recruitment and retention priorities.

5.2 Option 2 – Continue with the current ITT provision until August 2023.

- 5.2.1 The timescales to guarantee the quality of the provision going forward mean that significant resources and staffing capacity will be required to improve the programme to ensure areas of development which have been highlighted by both the external review of the programme and the Ofsted inspection.
- 5.2.2 There is not clear evidence, at this point in time, that the programme would be able to demonstrate that we are meeting the required standards could be achieved within the timescales required.
- 5.2.3 The impact of the Ofsted report, now published could likely reflect on trainees wishing to enrol onto an inadequate programme and for those who do, there could be claims made against the Council for delivery of providing an inadequate service if rapid improvements are not delivered.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 The ITT service is funded primarily through grant funding received from the Department for Education and income received from schools and trainees. The annual budgeted net cost of the service to the council is nil as all costs of the service are recovered through income. However, at the current volume of trainees registered for 2022/23 the service will be unable to recover full costs through income, leaving the service in a deficit position.
- 6.1.2 Based on 50% of the volume of trainees in 2021/22 for the 2022/23 financial year, should the service continue it is estimated that the service will incur a deficit of £107,000. This cost would need to be resourced within the Education portfolio.
- 6.1.3 The service will continue to operate until September 2022 with the current cohort of trainees. No cost pressures are expected to arise during this period due to income from the DFE and school and trainee income.
- 6.1.4 The consultation on this closure will commence in June 2022 and where possible existing staff will be redeployed elsewhere within the authority. It is anticipated that the Council will incur costs in closing the service and subject to any redeployment could be up to £124,000. These costs will be funded through the Education portfolio.

6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 There is no legal requirement for ECC to provide this service and alternate provisions are available.
- 6.2.2 Expenditure of any grant funding must be in line with the permitted uses of the grant or ECC may be liable for clawback of grant funding. The grant agreement has not been made available for review: there is a risk that the proposed use may not be in line with the proposals.

7. Equality and Diversity Considerations

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- 7.1** Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- 7.2** Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.3** Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.4** The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.5** The Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic

8. List of Appendices

Equality Comprehensive Impact Assessment

9. List of Background papers

None

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Tony Ball - Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	16/09/22
Clare Kershaw on behalf of Helen Lincoln - Executive Director of Children's and Families	14/19/22

In consultation with

Role	Date
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	18/8/22

Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	14/09/22
Laura Edwards on behalf of Paul Turner	