

15 July 2021

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Nick

We are writing to call for an immediate halt to your consultation on the review of the teacher training market because of the clear danger that it will cause fundamental and irreparable damage to the supply of high-quality teachers to our schools. We know you share with us the conviction that the quality of teaching is the single most important element in raising attainment and closing the disadvantage gap. It is therefore extraordinary that a consultation which itself recognises it will lead to 'far-reaching changes' to the provision of teacher training in England is launched at the tail-end of a summer term disrupted by the ongoing ravages of the pandemic with a deadline for responses which falls during the summer holidays when schools and colleges will be dealing with the outcome of results days. This feels very much like an attempt to railroad through a huge change to the model of teacher training provision with minimal opportunity for scrutiny and meaningful feedback.

We note that a member of the review's advisory group, Professor Sam Twiselton, is quoted in the press saying that the very short timescale proposed for implementing the changes presents risks to teacher supply and quality. Furthermore, the National Association of School-Based Initial Teacher Trainers has warned that the proposals represent an immediate and catastrophic risk to the teacher supply chain, and that several leading university education departments have also warned the changes may make their courses unviable, including both Oxford and Cambridge. Professor Twiselton observes that with an extra year many of the issues could be properly worked through and sensible solutions found. In the light of the above, this seems to us to be a very sensible suggestion, and we think that schools and pupils would be best served by you taking this consultation off the table at this time so that there is an opportunity for proper discussion.

The proposals in the review are indeed far-reaching and involve all existing providers of teacher training having to go through a reaccreditation process on the basis of a new set of quality requirements for their provision. There has been no opportunity to examine and understand these requirements and there is clearly a serious danger that existing providers will withdraw from teacher training and that other providers may put themselves forward without fully appreciating the scale of the challenge. There is a significant risk of creating gaps in provision and you are well aware that the teacher supply chain simply cannot be disrupted in this way without it consequently impacting very seriously on schools and pupils. There is no rationale provided in the report for why such far-reaching changes need to be delivered in such a rush particularly as the report recognises that there is a "strong local presence of ITT providers across England."

We are not suggesting that there is no merit in the proposals put forward in the review, and we recognise that there is a need for robust quality assurance of teacher training providers. However, any changes to the current system need to be made in a more considered and less rushed way in order to ensure that there is sector-wide support for any new system. We urge you to pause this process, and engage with teacher-training providers and education leaders to ensure that any reforms provide the best possible way forward for our schools and the children they serve. While we generally write to you privately, on this occasion this matter is of such pressing importance and there is so much already in the public domain, that we are making this an open letter.

Yours sincerely

**Geoff Barton – General Secretary
ASCL**

**Nick Brook – Deputy General Secretary
NAHT**

**Patrick Roach – General Secretary
NASUWT**

**Mary Bousted & Kevin Courtney – General Secretaries
NEU**

**Alison Peacock – CEO
Chartered College**

**Deborah Lawson – Assistant General Secretary
Voice Community**