

Impact Report 2025

# Why career changers matter and their potential for England's schools



**NOWTEACH**

# Founders' foreword

The case has been made but the challenge is even bigger.

This September, the ninth cohort of Now Teachers will step into their classrooms, following over 1,100 career changers who have gone before them. Another 250 bankers, journalists, scientists and engineers will bid farewell to their well-established careers, believing - as we do - that they can make a bigger difference in schools than in any lab or office.

Since we were founded in 2017, we have made the case for changing career to teaching. That choice has now become increasingly common.

Between 2017 and 2023, qualified entrants to teaching aged 40+ increased by 28% while the under-40s dropped by nine percent. This demographic is the only one to show a positive trend in teacher recruitment.

Career changers - an enormously diverse group of people with significant professional experience outside schools - may represent a minority of new entrants, but they have the potential to make an outsized contribution thanks to their experience.

The challenges facing the teaching profession today are even more acute than when we started Now Teach. Last year, secondary trainee recruitment targets were missed by 38%; they have been missed for 11 out of the last 12 years. One in eight maths lessons is taught by a non-maths expert and, despite the coming AI revolution, nearly half (46%) of computer science teaching lessons are taught

by non-specialists. We simply need more teachers.

Even more importantly, many teachers are not staying. Around 19% of new teachers leave within two years. Now Teachers, as in so many areas, buck this trend. They are 16% more likely to be teaching after two years than the average teacher and 36% more likely compared with other new teachers over 40 years old.

Now Teach is the only charity dedicated to career changers in teaching. We're the experts in why people switch and how to help them stay. Changing career is hard; changing career to teaching is astonishingly difficult. So the right support at the right time makes all the difference.

Now Teachers come into teaching to help young people achieve their full potential. In a world of increasing unpredictability, they are well-placed to help young people learn and prepare for adult life. They make a difference in the classroom and contribute to wider improvements through their skills and networks they bring to their schools.

There is so much more we must do to make sure career changers are the force we know they can be in schools. Specialist recruitment and support is essential if career changers are to have a daily impact on students' lives. This report makes the case for this support and this impact.

Thank you to everyone who helped us get this far and continues to advocate for our work.

**Katie Waldegrave MBE**  
**Lucy Kellaway OBE**

## Introduction



### An unexpected year demonstrated widespread support for Now Teach

We were recruiting our 2024 cohort of Now Teachers when the previous government unexpectedly and quietly shared they would not be funding a new Career Change Programme contract. This contract, which Now Teach successfully won and hoped to compete for again, has historically funded the majority of our work.

The news was not what we had planned for but it has not changed our work. We remain focused on recruiting and retaining career changers who can bring their distinct experiences and skills into schools to help give students a great education.

When the last government's decision became public, our Network, donors, sector partners and people who had just read the news got in touch to say: 'This seems wrong. Can I help?' Significant media interest drove a response that was humbling and energising. By summer we had the financial support to continue our work for two further years without a new government contract.

This has given us the time to keep delivering our work and plan for longer-term sustainability.

Business as usual (or a new version of it) continued: we met our 2024 target and are on track to recruit 250 new teachers in 2025. We continued providing support and guidance to our wider Network.

New donors also gave us a fresh impetus. They encouraged us to lean into our strengths and grow our ambition. We are now recruiting even more STEM teachers to fill the most urgent frontline gaps; we are planning the expansion of our Network in the most under-

served parts of the country. We want our career changers to bring their skills and experience into the schools that need them the most.

We still believe that the recruitment and retention of career changers to teaching should be funded by government. Philanthropic support has given us the time to make our case to the new government and develop new ideas. But for our core mission of career change teacher recruitment and retention, we need the government to step back in. The innovative approach piloted by Now Teach in 2017 has now been proven.

We are uniquely positioned to support the government's ambition to recruit and retain 6,500 extra teachers during this parliament. We can deliver 25% of the 6,500 target at just a fraction of the estimated cost.

Recruitment numbers are vital but they go hand-in-hand with our belief that career changers are a distinct kind of teacher with a distinct kind of impact. As we outline below, they can inform the curriculum with industry insight, bring their life experience to provide pastoral support and share up-to-date information about the world of work. And much more.

Our vision and mission remain unchanged but our ambitions have grown. We are excited by the prospect that thousands more young people could echo the words of Labeedah, a physics graduate studying for an MSc in Machine Learning: "As a former student of several Now Teach trainees, I know first-hand the benefit of having teachers with experience outside teaching - not least in the university and careers advice they were able to give. Thank you."


**Graham Elton, Chair of Trustees**  
**Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler, CEO**

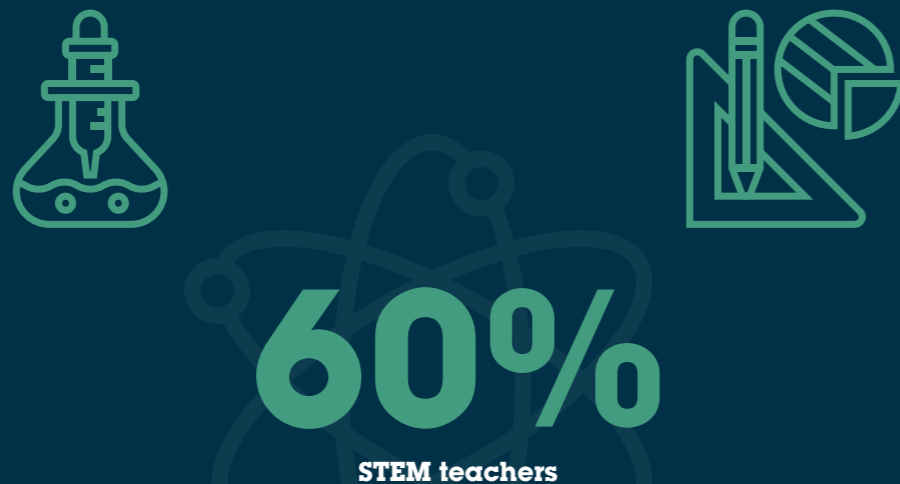
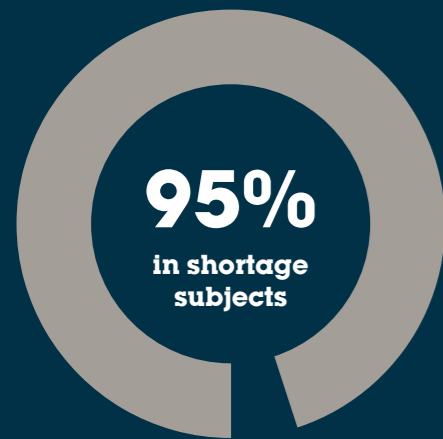
**We are uniquely positioned to support the government's ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.**



**3 million**  
people have heard of  
Now Teach

**1,100+**  
career changers recruited

 **86%** of Now Teachers would recommend Now Teach to friends and former colleagues.



Working in  
**506**  
schools



**26 years**  
average career experience



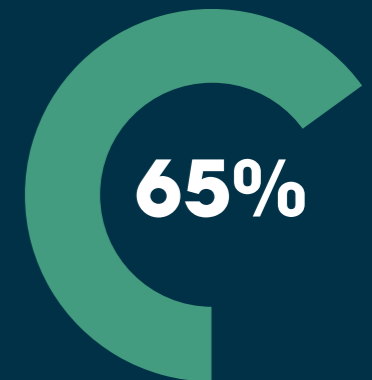
**27%**  
from an ethnic minority group

**30** different industries.  
Top five industries:



Finance Law Health Marketing IT

**Retention Impact**  
Two-thirds (65%) of Now Teachers still teaching said they didn't know if or it was likely they would've left teaching without Now Teach.



**"Now Teach helped simplify a complex process which I might have decided was too bothersome to tackle on my own."**  
Catherine Sampson,  
English teacher  
and former journalist

**Additional Recruits**  
70% of Now Teachers said they didn't know if or it was likely they wouldn't have started teacher training without Now Teach.



**"Now Teach has given me a network of like-minded individuals and opportunities I did not know I needed."**  
Lulu Robertson, chemistry teacher and former environmental services manager

# Why we exist

Now Teach was born out of a simple idea: schools and career changers can work together so more young people can get a great education.

On the one hand, England's schools face a variety of challenges from the persistent achievement gap between students from different backgrounds to the current teacher recruitment and retention crisis.

On the other hand, there is a portion of the older workforce with the valuable skills and a desire for a new challenge who are interested in but sceptical about teaching as a career. It was also clear that those people who did take the step into teaching often left the sector too quickly.

Our belief was that we could contribute to the work of improving England's schools by providing later-stage career changers with the right support to enter teacher training, qualify and thrive for the long-term.

These career changers would use their different backgrounds in many different ways that were distinct from other teachers, using their professional and life experience to have an impact on student learning, wellbeing and careers.

To do this we built a dedicated and long-term support offer to address the common problems of changing career and a Network to connect our new trainees with like-minded peers. This created a space outside of school that built Now Teachers' confidence and encouraged them to use their previous experience in the classroom, increasing their impact and the likelihood of them staying in teaching.

As our work developed, we realised the mutual benefits went even deeper:

- We could attract significant numbers of career changers to teach STEM and other shortage subjects.
- Career changers are more settled in their communities and are more likely to stay in their schools.
- Schools have specific needs that career changers are well-placed to support.

In developing our model, we had a clear vision of what positive impact would look like.

**Recruitment:** Increase the number of career-changers entering the profession who would not have become teachers without Now Teach.

**Retention:** Support Now Teachers so they stay longer than the average recruit.

**Impact:** Provide a structure to Now Teachers and school leaders so their wider expertise can best benefit schools and students.

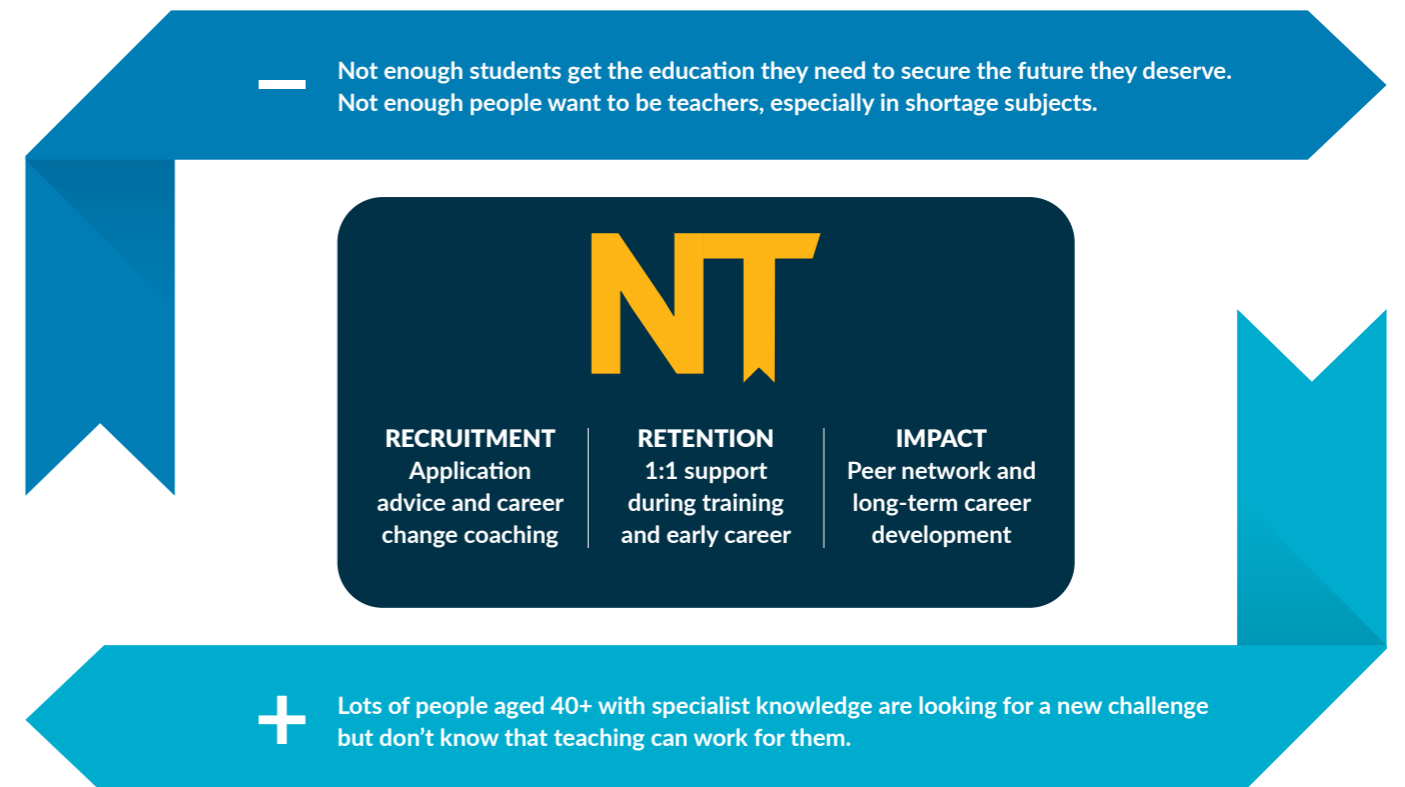
After more than 1,100 recruits we now have a clear sense of how we are delivering against these priorities and what we want to do next.

**Expertise comes in so many forms. If you have achieved within your first career, and have knowledge you can share, why wouldn't our children benefit from that?**

Dame Alison Peacock, CEO, Chartered College of Teaching

**"Some of the joys of teaching – constantly changing from one lesson to the next with different age groups, different student abilities and student behaviours - are exhilarating. It is also easy to feel that one is completely losing control."**

Vincent Neate, Cohort 2019, Maths teacher and former KPMG partner



# Recruitment

## Finding a new kind of teacher

### The challenge

Teacher recruitment is a chronic problem in England. Secondary schools have faced the worst shortages. Since 2017, cumulative teacher trainee recruitment targets have been missed by 26% or over 43,000 trainees. Government targets have been missed for 11 out of the past 12 years.

This shortage is especially acute in some subjects. In 2024, Modern Foreign Languages reached only 34% of its target, Physics only 17% of target, Maths reached 64% and Computer Science only 34% of target. In a world where technology will only become more important, these shortages risk damaging our young people's professional futures and the entire country's economic growth.

### Our solution

Teacher recruitment traditionally focuses on new graduates. Experienced hires have often come from within the sector, such as teaching assistants becoming teachers. This has missed an important cohort: experienced people from other sectors looking for more meaningful work. Since 2017, we have campaigned to make changing career to teaching attractive and realistic using high-profile PR and targeted digital media. Over the last five years, our news stories have been seen 20 million times, 3 million people have heard of Now Teach and over half a million have visited our website.

Change career is no small undertaking, so our expert advisers coach and mentor aspiring trainees, helping them solve challenges and make a confident choice that teaching is for them.

**"I found the support excellent. I could not have made the change without Now Teach."**

Nick Golson, French teacher and former charity CEO

### Our impact

We have recruited over 1,100 teachers, exceeding our overall DfE recruitment target by 107%. This makes us a significant outlier when teacher recruitment targets have been missed over the same period.

70% of Now Teachers said they didn't know if or it was likely they wouldn't have started teacher training without Now Teach.

Recruitment to our Career Change Programme and Network is only part of the picture. There has been a significant ripple effect on our target demographic: England has seen proportional growth in new 40+ teachers from 15% in 2015 to 19% in 2023. Between 2022 and 2023 the number of teacher trainee candidates aged 40+ increased by 67%.

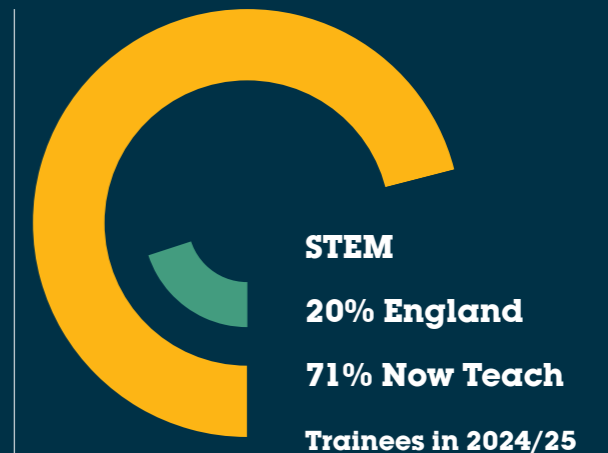
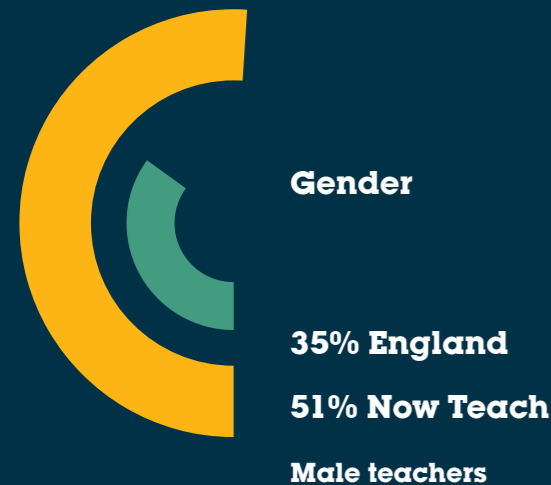
We are confident this growth has been due to our campaigns raising the status of teaching, especially our consistent coverage in quality newspapers, TV and radio.



National recruitment targets have been consistently missed. Now Teach has exceeded its goals: our DfE contracts delivered 107% of our targets.

National recruitment targets met just 56% of its target on average over the past three years.

70% of Now Teachers said they didn't know if or it was likely they wouldn't have started teacher training without Now Teach.



# Retention

Support designed around career changers

## The challenge

Too many teachers are leaving teaching: 19% of new teachers leave within two years and a 2022 survey indicated that 44% of all teachers in England plan to quit within five years. Historically, teachers aged 40+ are more likely to leave, with 41% leaving after just two years in the classroom.

## Our solution

Our ambition is to help career changers stay in teaching for the long term, so we worked to understand the challenges people face when joining the profession later in their career. We found career-change teachers have specific needs:

1. Support to translate skills and experience to their new context of schools.
2. Help navigating the transition of their professional identity: from expert to novice and back again.
3. Guidance to help schools understand the distinct value career changers can bring.
4. Connection to a community of other professionals navigating the same transition.
5. A 'third-space' outside of schools and training providers to bring these elements together.

We used these requirements to build the Now Teach programme including: advice to choose an appropriate training course; preparation for training; an ongoing 1-1 relationship with a Programme and Network Manager; regular development sessions and affinity groups tailored to career changers; professional and personal coaching; a bespoke online platform; a Network innovation fund; and an annual conference.

## Our impact

Our programme is making a difference: Now Teachers are more likely to stay in the profession than other new teachers. This has astonished some of our early sceptics who pointed out that older trainees are generally more likely to leave within two years.

When asked what made a difference to them, Now Teachers identified three benefits that mirrored the needs we identified:

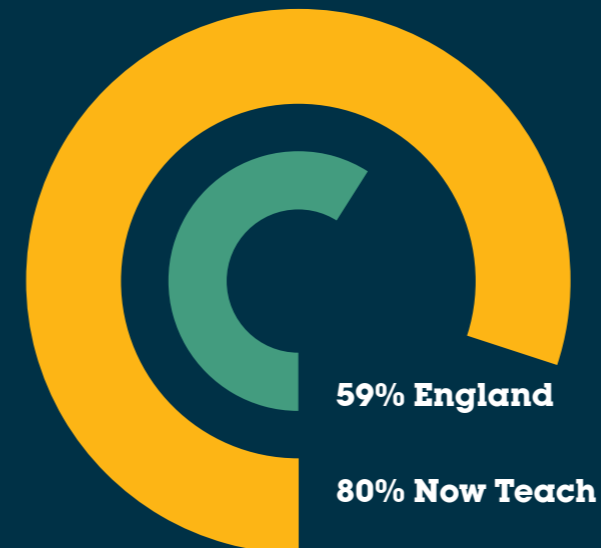
1. Specialised support for career changers: 84% said they know whom to contact with questions or recommendations.
2. Recognition of the value of their prior career: 76% said Now Teach increased their confidence as an education professional.
3. A community of other career changers to share experiences and solutions: 86% feel part of the Now Teach Network.

Two-thirds (65%) of Now Teachers still teaching said they didn't know if or it was likely they would've left teaching without Now Teach.

This reassured us that providing tailored support to career changers and building a movement of people navigating the same transition is crucial to increasing retention.

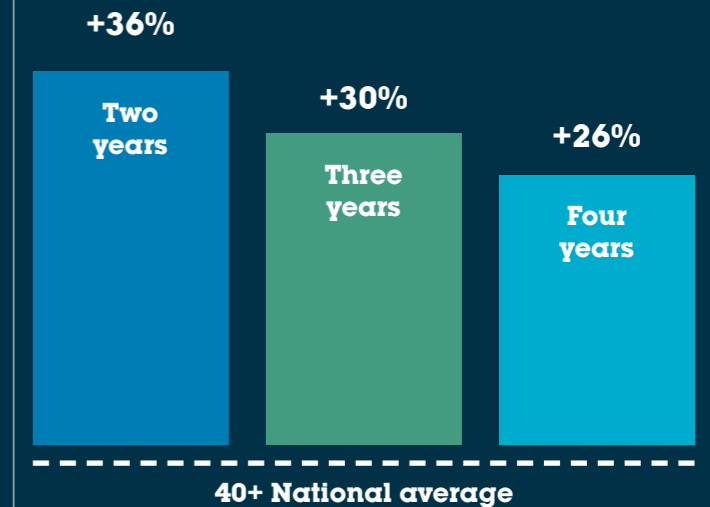


## Overall retention



Newly qualified teachers aged 40+ still teaching after two years.

## Now Teach retention continues



Proportion of 40+ Now Teachers still teaching compared to new teachers of a similar age.

## STEM retention

# 37%

A STEM teacher aged 40+ on the Now Teach programme is 37% more likely to remain after 2 years, compared to a new teacher of a similar age.

## Recommendation

# 86%

Now Teachers would recommend Now Teach to friends and former colleagues who were considering a new career.

**“School got terribly granular: about glue sticks and whether I’d actually wiped the whiteboards clean. You find yourself getting sucked into this stuff, thinking ‘This is not why I came into teaching.’ And then I go for a talk with Now Teach and the bigger picture will be talked about and I think ‘Yes, this is why I’m in it’.”**

(Now Teacher, 2017 Cohort)

# Impact in schools

Getting the most out of career changers' skills and experience

## The challenge

Career changers have many skills and experiences but it can be hard to harness them when schools have so many priorities. Career changers are an untapped resource who can help meet the myriad challenges schools face; understanding how they can make a difference in school improvement is key.

Research into career-change teachers highlights the knowledge, skills and experience they can bring but there is a gap when it comes to how they can translate and apply this knowledge in a school setting.

## Our solution

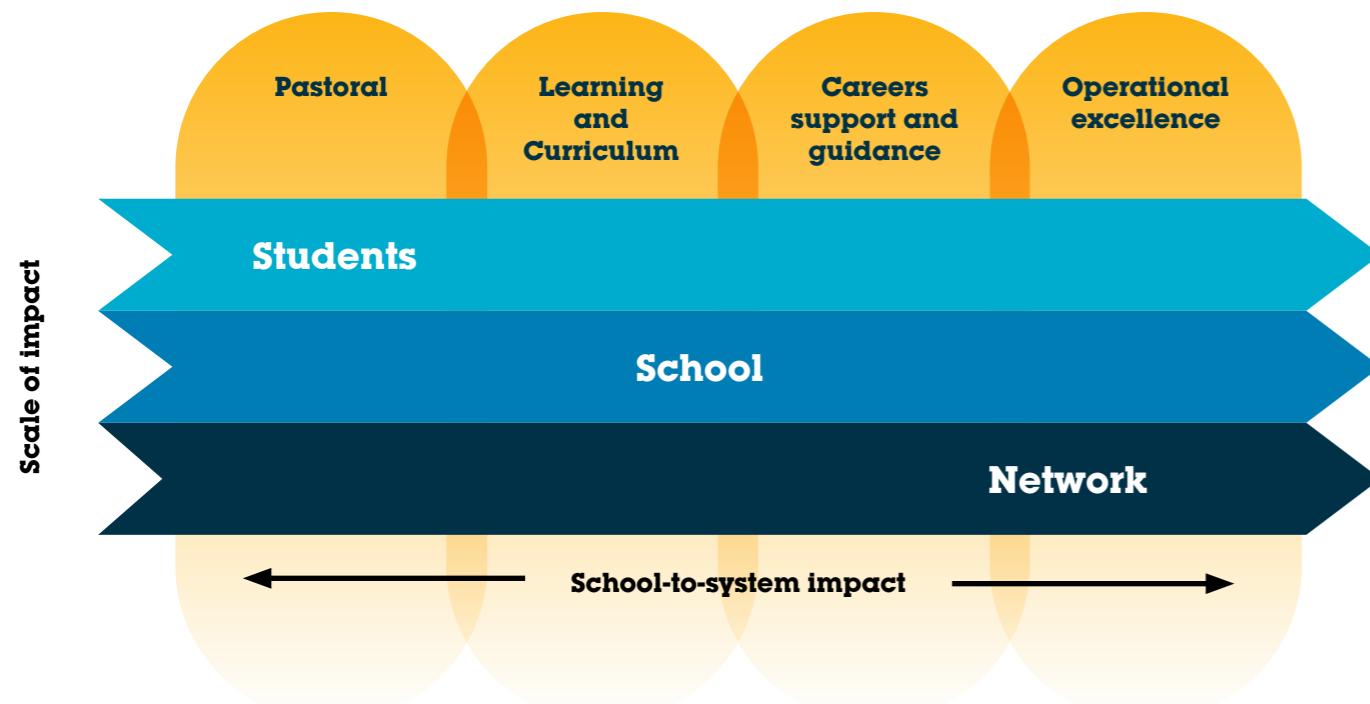
To show how this experience can be applied, we have created an impact framework, based on interviews with Now Teachers, their colleagues and students to get an in-depth understanding of their work in schools.

This found four key areas of impact where they typically make the biggest contribution: pastoral;

learning and curriculum; careers support & guidance; and operational excellence. This impact can be focused on an individual student, groups of students or school-to-system impact.

Typically career changers bring fresh perspectives, an openness to learning, self-efficacy, along with knowledge, skills and experience the sector needs. In the classroom they infuse the curriculum with real world examples, contextualise why learning matters, and in the staffroom they can use their professional experience to support other colleagues.

Our impact framework is a tool to help career-change teachers plan, understand and increase their impact. It outlines common pathways where career changers already deliver impact for the benefit of students and schools. Critically, it can also link neatly with school improvement planning processes and career changer professional development.



# Impact on students

## Careers support and guidance

75% of training providers said Now Teachers provide careers advice and support to students.

## Increase students' awareness of the options available to them.

'His business and finance know-how has been valuable,' says Danielle, an ECT mentor and head of department. 'We're putting on workshops that go beyond the curriculum. He's running sessions about working in the world of finance.' 'I love the careers stuff,' Will says, and mentions he is also 'working to get the Year 12 Health and Social Care students apprenticeships' at the local care home where he and his wife are trustees.

**Will Hawkes: maths teacher and former international banker**

## Provide accurate, up-to-date information on the world of work.

'A number of students have talked to me about getting into journalism. I give them advice, thoughts on what they could do and how they might be able to break into the industry: You should think about reading this blog regularly, listening to this podcast regularly, following these people on Twitter... Start writing something, join your student newspaper or radio... I did a bit of interviewing for jobs at the BBC; I have an awareness of what makes a good candidate.'

**Matt Booker: history teacher and former BBC producer**

## Learning and Curriculum

100% of partners say Now Teachers connect the curriculum to real world examples.

## Drawing on networks and experiences to broaden the offer.

'One of my friends is a real German rap singer. We studied his songs, then they got to ask him questions. And they were blown away! They were shy - it took a lot of modelling from me - but he was brilliant, waiting for them to frame the sentences.'

**Olivia Carucci, modern foreign languages teacher and formerly in asset management**

## Contextualise why learning matters.

'I say, I did a PhD in physics but then went to work in the City. Trading involves the same ideas as physics: you've got a complicated problem, you're trying to work out what matters, you're making sense of models, you're trying to improve them. They're not all interested in science, but might be interested in making lots of money and being a trader. It's a hook, at least.'

**Dr Stephen Kennedy, physics teacher and former derivatives trader**

## Pastoral

95% of partners said Now Teachers support pupil wellbeing or mental health.

## Bring wider life experience

When I started teaching, I quickly became overwhelmed by the needs of the children with special educational needs (SEN). I had been diagnosed with ADHD aged 52, but I often felt frustration with my fellow ADHDers.

Through discussions with my mentor, I overhauled my teaching resources with SEN pupils in my mind. I made my more hyperactive pupils 'book monitors', allowing them to be out of their seats, collecting exercise books.

As the disruption began to subside, my confidence improved, as did the positive atmosphere in class and after a few months pupils' progress was now visible in my mark book.

**Emma Barker, French teacher and former journalist**

## Operational excellence

### Draw on best practice from previous sectors

'I've seen EDI documents in another education context and I know some of the legal documents that are relevant. If I look at a policy in school, I can say "Oh, actually that's not what the law says." I have more of an overview of how things work, and of what doesn't work, because of my previous experiences.'

**Ildiko Eva Csengei, English teacher and former academic**

# What is next for Now Teach?

## Our 2025 strategy

We believe our work has never been more urgent. As a result, we are focused on growth alongside deepening our impact. The government was elected on a very welcome manifesto commitment to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers in the coming years. We believe career changers are a critical part of this.

With the right funding, we can provide 25 percent of the 6,500 new teacher target – at just a fraction of the estimated total policy cost.

Over the next five years we aim to:

- Recruit 1,625 new additional teachers with over 15 years' industry experience; a third from outside London and the South East; a majority in STEM subjects; and an above-average proportion from ethnic minority groups.
- Retain our new teachers at above-average rates.
- Address disadvantage by increasing our presence in high-need schools from 30 percent to 60 percent.
- Deepen impact by supporting career changers to translate their experience into classrooms.
- Build our Network further so they support one another and raise the status of the profession.

To tackle the teacher recruitment and retention crisis, the government needs specialist pathways for trainees beyond the traditional profile of the recent graduate. This should include career changers. The over-40s, partly driven by Now Teach's campaigns, are the only group with recent growth. We must maintain and build on this momentum.

Career changers should be an essential of any plan to meet the targets that have been missed for a decade.

A strong pipeline of career changers into teaching will bring a wide range of additional benefits to students, schools and the sector. We believe that Now Teach is uniquely positioned to deliver this.

Unlocking these ambitions requires balancing government funding with the support of donors. The government's funding of our core work will unlock the value-add driven by our philanthropic supporters.

Your advocacy and support will continue to be essential. Please share this report with your contacts and get in touch to join our campaign.

**Graham Elton, Chair of Trustees**  
**Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler, CEO**

# Thank you

We are here because of our supporters.

We have our new plan because of our donor, sector and partner support. This has sustained Now Teach through a tumultuous year and ensured we have the resources to plan for our future.

Thank you to those who have donated to us.

AKO Foundation  
Berry Street Foundation  
Charles Kirwan-Taylor  
Charlotte Hogg  
CHK Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Greig Walker  
John Armitage Charitable Trust  
Paddy Dear  
Stelios Philanthropic Foundation  
The Hg Foundation  
The Julia Rausing Trust  
The Rothermere Foundation  
The Swire Charitable Trust  
Dr Tony Trapp MBE  
Other donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Thanks also to our pro bono and service donors.

Bain & Company  
Passion Partnership CIC  
Lexington Communications

# 1,625

Recruit 1,625 expert teachers before the next general election.

# 60%

Increase our presence in high-need schools from 30 percent of our network to 60 percent by 2029.

# 25%

With the right funding, we can provide 25 percent of the government's 6,500 new teacher target.

**You can join us by becoming a teacher, donating funds, providing pro bono support or getting your company or organisation involved. Please contact us at [info@nowteach.org.uk](mailto:info@nowteach.org.uk)**



# Now Teachers' letters from students

"You've taught me stuff about Business Studies that I didn't know and explained it clearly when I didn't understand it."

"Thank you for helping me achieve a 7 in maths and getting me to my goal of Oxford."

"You really are an outstanding teacher. You helped me get over my fear of people finding out about me having Dyslexia. But now, thanks to you, I am an Ambassador for Dyslexia."

"Thank you. I am very proud of myself as I thought I wasn't going to succeed in French but now I feel confident in myself."

## Contact us

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