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How do we prepare the next generation of planners?

The Planner's annual careers survey revealed a stark view of our profession in March. Workloads are up, resources are scarce, and qualified planners are in short supply. Planning officers and consultancies are struggling to attract and retain talent. This matters not just to the future of planners, but to the communities we represent.

To increase the planner pipeline, we need collective action and government support. RTPI has created the 'Working in the UK' online resources and spearheaded initiatives like RTPI student bursaries, apprenticeship programmes, our CHANGE action plan and outreach into primary and secondary schools. But what else can we do to inspire and prepare the next generation to choose to be Chartered with the RTPI?

The proportion of planning students becoming Licentiates appears to be increasing, but this alone won't solve the shortage. Another important aspect is influencing politicians and the public to value the planning system and qualified planners. Our members report a need



for more planning students regardless, with a better straightforward narrative on accreditation to promote the career.

Our recent education policy barriers for review project – a key outcome of the RTPI 'Education for Everyone' agenda – aims to broaden access to and through educational paths into Chartered memberships.

This review is a rigorous and continuous process that will consider all opinions we receive. No decisions have yet been made on the future of our

education policy. When they are, it will be done so as to ensure a diverse and knowledgeable 'new generation' is set for their first jobs across the sector.

The current RTPI degree accreditation policy was adopted in 2003. We believe that by reviewing it now, we can broaden access to, and through, the educational pathways into Chartered membership, removing unintended barriers for students to the development of qualified planners, as well as for universities and employers.

Over 18 months, we've reached out to universities, members, employers and students through surveys and focus groups, asking how we recognise and assess degree-level qualifications and support graduates into planning careers. This includes asking how long it takes graduates to complete their degree at either undergraduate or postgraduate level and how they are introduced to the practical skills needed in the workplace, at university.

Experience shows us that employers have the ability to lead graduates to Chartership – the end point of planning education – and instill professional practice and ethics. But, aware of the pressures and rising workloads of staff, we know it is crucial that young planners are adequately set up to thrive in their roles and benefit from on-the-job learning. Mentoring by employers remains key to a successful start.

It is our collective duty to make sure all planners are adequately prepared. 