



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

# **High Potential Senior Leaders Programme Evaluation: Qualitative and Desktop**

**Final Research Report**

**BMG Research**

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## Introduction

This report presents the findings from research undertaken by BMG Research to inform the evaluation of the High Potential Senior Leaders (HPSL) Programme. The programme was branded as the Future Leaders programme and run by the Future Leaders Trust<sup>1</sup>.

## Background

The HPSL programme is delivered by the Future Leaders Trust (FLT) on behalf of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). Established in 2006, the HPSL programme is a leadership development programme designed to raise levels of pupil achievement in challenging schools by developing high-potential school leaders to become headteachers in these settings. Ultimately it aims to improve the life chances of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds through outstanding school leadership and management. Initially, graduates of the HPSL programme were expected to take up a headship position in a challenging school within 4 years of commencing the programme, though this expectation is now expressed as a 2-5 year period.

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<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork for this evaluation was conducted in 2015 and the reporting completed in Summer 2016. It therefore relates to a previous design of the HPSL programme. In Autumn 2016, DfE ran a procurement exercise for a re-designed HPSL programme. Ambition School Leadership (created from the merger of Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders) was successful in bidding for this, and have a contract to deliver until 2022.

## Future Leaders Trust's Mission Statement

Our mission is to raise the achievement of children, regardless of background, and to provide them with equal choices and opportunities in life. By developing a network of exceptional school leaders, we are transforming challenging schools and working to eradicate educational disadvantage.

### Core Beliefs

**Every child:** All children can be successful, regardless of their background.

**No excuses:** Every excuse is a step on the road to failure.

**High expectations:** Children, staff, schools and communities will live up to the expectations placed upon them.

**Lead learning:** The most important things that happen in schools happen in classrooms.

**No islands:** When great school leaders work together, anything is possible.

The three year HPSL programme can be seen as consisting of two phases, the first year consisting of Foundations training and the Residency year, and years two to three consisting of further training and support in a senior leadership role in a challenging school. After the programme is completed, the Future Leaders Trust has offered participants continued access to online resources<sup>2</sup> and encouraged continued involvement in additional leadership development, outlined below.

- **Phase 1 – Foundations (Year 1):** This phase focuses on building foundations for a successful residency year such as quality of teaching, behaviour, school culture, curriculum development, data analysis and intervention and performance management of staff through an induction day, two weekends and a two-week residential.
- **Phase 1 – Residency (Year 1):** Residency schools agree to hire a Future Leaders participant as a senior leader in their school and commit to ensuring they receive 6 key residency experiences which include school improvement, behaviour management, data analysis, teaching and learning, monitoring and management of staff performance and building an effective learning community. The residency year also includes regional events for network building and opportunities to share best practice, a study tour (now in the UK but previously in the US for cohorts in 2012 and prior), coaching by the participant's assigned Leadership Development Adviser (LDA) and regular one-to-one feedback meetings with the Residency Head.

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<sup>2</sup> Initially this was offered free of charge, but more recently former participants have paid a membership fee for continued access.

- **Phase 2 – Post-residency (Years 2 and 3):** Following the residency year, participants need to secure a senior leadership role either at the same school or elsewhere. If an appropriate role is not secured then the participant may choose to leave the programme or to become an Associate Future Leader until such time as they are able to find an appropriate school or role and re-join the programme. The focus in this phase is to have a whole school impact across several areas. Elements include modules that cover technical aspects of headship, such as finance, HR management and governance, which participants choose to best suit their needs, regional events as per year 1, coaching as per year 1 but with reduced LDA hours and cohort weekends specific to each cohort's needs based on feedback received from the impact initiatives (see definition provided below).
- **Post programme support – pre-headship:** For participants identified as ready for headship, to support their headship applications this phase previously consisted of two distinct programmes – the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH),<sup>3</sup> which is not funded through the Future Leaders programme, and Headship Now! which consists of practical career support, group sessions and personalised support, a residential weekend focused on refining key skills and additional support for women in overcoming barriers to headship. However, it should be noted that in 2014 these two programmes merged.
- **Post programme support – headship:** The Headship Institute, which is a dedicated forum for participants who have become headteachers, includes support in managing finances, media training, peer-led school visits, Ofsted training and an annual symposium.

Also included within the programme is the **Impact Initiative** which is an integral part of the programme that ensures participants are having an impact on the staff and students within their schools and developing the skills necessary to reach headship. The Impact Initiatives are centred around five key objectives that ensure the participant is provided with the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate impact on students and staff.
- Use data to establish targets, baseline starting points and evaluate outcomes.
- Implement a whole school strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> [National Professional Qualification for Headship](#)



- Lead others in implementing a strategy.
- Reflect on practice and professional development.

The Impact Initiative is a project led by the HPSL participants in their school. It is reported back to Future Leaders Trust on an online form, designed by the Future Leaders Trust, which participants fill in twice a year across their first three years of the programme. It should be noted that from Cohort 2012 onwards the completion of this form was made mandatory but prior to this the completion of this form was optional.

## Evaluation approach

A holistic evaluation of the HPSL programme is being conducted by the NCTL and a broad programme of research was commissioned to assess the programme against its aims and objectives and value for money, to ascertain whether and how the programme is meeting its brief and to provide the evidence behind this. The evaluation includes a range of inputs, including:

- An analysis of school performance in engaged schools, and a group of comparator schools.
- An analysis of participant progression to leadership posts in challenging schools, including their progression to further training (e.g. NPQH), progression to jobs and to more senior roles.
- A desk top review of impact evidence submitted by participants as part of their qualification (undertaken by BMG Research).
- An analysis of engagement data, i.e. the number and characteristics of participants and schools involved with the HPSL programme.
- Surveys with current and past participants and residency schools.
- Interviews and group discussions with current and past participants and residency school heads (undertaken by BMG Research).

This report presents the findings from the two strands of the evaluation of the HPSL programme undertaken by BMG Research including the desk-top review of impact evidence, and interviews and group discussions with current and past participants and residency school heads.

## Aims

The aim of these strands of the research are to deliver robust insights to inform the evaluation of the HPSSL Programme and deepen NCTL's understanding of its effectiveness in key areas including:

- The impact of the programme;
- Its reach and engagement;
- Participants' views and learning outcomes; and
- Perceived value for money.

The research aims to provide a picture of how current participants are using the skills and knowledge gained through the programme to improve leadership and attainment within challenging schools; how past participants have done this; and what impact this has had on schools and pupils (including both perceived impact and where impact can be evidenced through available data, wherever possible the research distinguishes between these types of reported impacts).

It also aims to provide evidence on whether and how the programme is meeting the needs and preferences of those involved in it, in particular the learning objectives of current and past participants, and the needs and expectations of Residency Heads involved in its delivery.

## Evaluation framework

The detailed objectives of the evaluation can be aligned with the basic logic model framework frequently used by the UK Government for programme evaluation. In the context of this evaluation this requires assessment of:

- **Process:** How effectively and efficiently were programme activities delivered. Key questions here concern timeliness, appropriateness of delivery, and effectiveness of communications.
- **Outputs:** This aspect of evaluation assesses the extent to which targets of various kinds were met, the reasons why they were or were not met, and generates lessons as to good (and bad) practice which is associated with target achievement/non-achievement.
- **Outcomes:** Outcome evaluation explores the extent to which immediate 'soft' outcomes (improvement in participants' confidence or attitude to headship, for

example), intermediate outcomes (achievement in respect of closing the attainment gap in years 1 and 2, for example), and final outcomes (headship and continuing improvements in pupil attainment) were achieved.

- **Impacts:** Impact evaluation explores the overall value of the programme, exploring the overall impacts on individuals, institutions, pupils, and communities; and more specifically exploring the contribution to closing the attainment gap in schools as a result of the programme's outputs and outcomes. While the research programme does not comprise a formal assessment of the programme's additionality based on an assessment of the counterfactual, it does explore value for money.

Following an initial scoping phase a broad logic model (including key questions for this research) was designed in partnership with NCTL in order to guide this evaluation. The logic model is included in Appendix 1 for information.

## Methodology

In order to provide timely information to the NCTL this research was delivered through a two-stage model, combining the same two overarching methodologies at each stage to feed into interim and final reporting: These two methodologies are 1) a desk review of impact evidence and 2) qualitative research with current/past participants and Residency Heads.

### Phase 1

An interim report was provided to NCTL in May 2015, which outlined the findings from Phase 1 of the research. This report was not published, but the findings of this work are included in this report. This phase consisted of 45 in-depth interviews with participants and Residency Heads, which took place in March 2015, and analysis of 38 Impact Initiative forms.

This phase of the research provided a holistic overview of participants views on the programme, in particular their views on the content and delivery of the HPSL programme. Findings from the interim report are summarised in the following chapter, whilst this report focuses on building on these to address the key research questions.

### Completed interviews in Phase 1

In Phase 1, BMG Research undertook 45 in-depth qualitative interviews with a mix current participants, past participants (including those who have exited or are on a programme break, those who have secured a headship, and those who have not yet

secured a headship), and Residency Heads. Amongst the 45 interviews, respondents were from a mix of regions and cohorts, had a range of Impact Initiative scores, and were from schools with varying levels of pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years (Ever6FSM).

## **Phase 2**

Following the delivery of the interim report Phase 2 was designed to provide further focus on the impacts the programme had achieved for participants, their schools, and their pupils.

This phase consisted of 63 in-depth qualitative interviews and 5 online focus groups with participants and Residency Heads, and analysis of 100 Impact Initiative forms (inclusive of the 38 reviewed in Phase 1) in September to November 2015.

### **Completed interviews and focus groups in Phase 2**

In Phase 2, BMG Research undertook 63 in-depth qualitative interviews and online discussion groups with a total of 15 attendees including current participants, past participants (including those who have exited or are on a programme break, those who have secured a headship, and those who have not yet secured a headship), and Residency Heads. Amongst those that we spoke to, respondents were from a mix of regions and cohorts, had a range of Impact Initiative scores, and were from schools with varying levels of Ever6FSM.

The Table 1 provides a breakdown of the interviews and groups undertaken across Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research. Some individuals appear more than once in the table, as some respondents were eligible for multiple categories e.g. one Residency Head was also a past participant. Also those who have now secured a headship role even if they are still a current participant are shown in their cohort year as well as the secured headship row.

**Table 1 Breakdown of respondents**

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
<b>Current participants</b>			
Cohort 2012	6	17	23
Cohort 2013	6	16	22
Cohort 2014	10	15	25
<b>Past participants</b>			
Secured headship	4	23	27
Not secured headship	8	9	17
Exited/programme break	3	3	6
<b>Residency Heads</b>			
Cohort 2012	3	3	6
Cohort 2013	2	8	10
Cohort 2014	6	7	13

Source: BMG Research

It should also be noted that amongst these interviews seven sets of participants and Residency Heads were ‘matched pairs’; the participant had undertaken their residency in the corresponding Residency Head’s school whether that be from the depths and/or the groups. It should also be noted that for one of the matched pairs the participant was interviewed in Phase 1 and the Residency Head in Phase 2.

## **Delivering qualitative interviews and focus groups**

### **Recruitment**

Respondents were recruited via telephone by BMG’s dedicated qualitative recruitment team using contacts provided by the Future Leaders Trust.

During the recruitment stage, potential respondents were provided with an outline of the research aims and objectives, and details of what the in-depth interviews would involve. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the research, and their permission was also sought to audio-record the interviews. All booked respondents were then sent a confirmation email prior to their appointment to confirm the full

details of the interview, and to provide a senior contact at BMG for them to contact if they had any concerns or queries. As a thank you for taking part in the research, respondents were offered an award of 4 hours payback<sup>4</sup> within the HPSL Programme, where applicable<sup>5</sup>.

### **Conduct of interviews and focus groups**

The in-depth interviews were undertaken between September and November 2015, by independent qualitative researchers from BMG Research. All interviews were undertaken over the telephone, and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. At the start of the interview, respondents were assured that any comments made or verbatim quotations used in the report would be anonymous and would not be attributed to named individuals. They were also told that the interview would be audio-recorded (unless they objected to this) and the file would be stored securely at BMG.

The online focus groups were conducted in October 2015. Each lasted approximately 90 minutes and were conducted using the VisionsLive platform. All online focus groups were moderated by two members of the qualitative research team using this platform.

### **Analysis of in-depth interviews**

A grounded theory approach to analysis was undertaken whereby all themes and findings reported against the key areas of interest will have emerged 'organically' through the in-depth interviews themselves rather than through hypothesis testing - thus making the overall findings more robust and grounded in the experiences and views of respondents.

To achieve this once the interviews were completed and transcribed, they were analysed using a thematic framework analysis approach. Using this approach where particular themes and commonalities emerged between respondents these were included in the report. The views of individual respondents are only included where they have had a very different experience to others to highlight specific instances where things have gone well or not well.

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<sup>4</sup> Participants in the HPSL Programme commit to paying back 30 days of their own time to the network e.g. supporting new participants. This is in exchange for the high quality subsidised training and development they receive as part of the programme.

<sup>5</sup> Residency Heads, exited participants and any participants who had already completed their 30 days payback were not offered the award of 4 hours payback.

## Impact form analysis

A total of 100 Impact Initiative forms were analysed across both Phase 1 and 2 with the documentary analysis for Phase 1 consisting of 38 forms.

The selection criteria for all 100 forms was based on the participant information file provided by the Future Leaders Trust which contained the information of all participants in the programme since it was established in 2006. This file was used to select 100 'participants' whose form for a particular year would be analysed to ensure, where possible, a spread of residency, year 2 and year 3 forms were analysed. Additional criteria was applied to the selection of the Impact Initiative forms, to ensure a good spread by wider variables, including the participant's Impact Initiative score, Ever6FSM, and region (London/Non-London).

Given that completion of the Impact Initiative form did not become obligatory until cohort 2012 there is a skew, to some extent, towards residency year forms in the documentary analysis (60 out of 100, compared with 28 Year 2 forms and 12 Year 3 forms).

Participants fill in their impact initiative forms twice in a year – once in March and once in June. All the information analysed is based on the participants June submission to reflect learning across a full school year.

The forms selected were merged into an analysis framework to allow interrogation of individual questions as well as any sub group analysis necessary for questions, such as, by phase or cohort. For open ended questions where participants had provided individual comments all comments were reviewed and a coding frame for each question created and applied to the comments. This included, where necessary, reviewing and gaining further information from additional documents provided by the participant. The following table provides a breakdown of the forms analysed against the total sample provided by the Future Leaders Trust.

**Table 2 Breakdown of Impact Initiative forms analysed**

	<b>Forms selected</b>	<b>Total sample</b>
<b>Cohort</b>		
<b>2012</b>	34%	29%
<b>2013</b>	34%	33%
<b>2014</b>	32%	38%
<b>FSM</b>		
<b>Not provided</b>	7%	6%
<b>20-25%</b>	1%	3%
<b>26-49%</b>	37%	36%
<b>50% and Over</b>	52%	52%
<b>Under 20%</b>	3%	3%
<b>Programme status</b>		
<b>Current - post residency</b>	61%	55%
<b>Current - residency</b>	32%	38%
<b>Exited</b>	3%	3%
<b>Programme break</b>	4%	4%
<b>Region</b>		
<b>London</b>	37%	36%
<b>Non-London</b>	63%	64%
<b>Phase</b>		
<b>Not provided</b>	4%	5%
<b>All-through</b>	7%	9%
<b>Primary</b>	13%	12%
<b>Secondary</b>	76%	74%
<b>Head</b>		
<b>Yes</b>	7%	9%
<b>No</b>	93%	91%

Source: BMG Research



## Note on the interpretation of qualitative research and data

Qualitative interviews can provide an understanding of what people think, need, want and care about – and can explore the reasons behind those views. The researcher guides the respondent through a series of topics (agreed beforehand with the client), but in a less structured way than with a quantitative (survey) questionnaire. Findings may emerge from interviews which the researcher and client had not previously considered; these can be identified and explored.

It is the researcher's job to ensure that all of the client's questions are answered and that every respondent has an opportunity to express his or her point of view. It should also be remembered that interview participants may hold views that are based on incorrect information. It is the researcher's role to explore and report participants' perceptions, not necessarily to correct any misunderstanding or incorrect perceptions.

When interpreting the findings from the interviews, it is important to note that they are not based on quantitative statistical evidence. When reporting the findings, terms such as 'several', 'some', 'many' and 'most' have been used to reflect the commonality of responses identified during the analysis process. It is important to note that where such terms have been used they refer solely to those who were interviewed, and are not therefore representative of HPSL participants and Residency Heads. Quotations from respondents have also been included in the report (indented text) to provide evidence for the views and experiences reported (both those that were more common, and minority views). It is important to stress that these quotations are verbatim and represent the views of the individual respondent concerned. Quotations were selected for inclusion in this report on the basis that they met the following criteria:

- where inclusion of a quote does not mean an individual respondent is 'over-represented' in the quotes;
- where a quote explains an issue more succinctly than could be otherwise described in the body text; and
- where a quote highlights a key issue discussed by several respondents in a succinct and clear manner.

## This report

This report presents and summarises the final findings from the research following the document analysis and qualitative interviews conducted during Phase 2 of this evaluation.

# 1. Early findings from Phase 1 of the research

The following chapter summarises the key findings emerging from Phase 1 of the research. These findings were provided to NCTL at the end of Phase 1 to provide a formative assessment for the NCTL and the Future Leaders Trust to inform their knowledge and understanding of the effectiveness of the programme, identify areas where the programme is perceived as particularly beneficial, and areas where further development could be required. As described previously, all findings are based on the information gained from 45 in depth interviews with participants and Residency Heads, and a review of 38 impact initiative forms.

It should be noted that due to time constraints and the number and type of individuals interviewed in this phase (only 12 had completed the programme and of these only 4 had entered headship), these findings mostly relate to participants views and experiences of the programme. Issues surrounding impact were explored in more detail in Phase 2 and are presented in the subsequent chapters of this report.

## Joining the HPSL programme

Participant interviews in Phase 1 indicated that they believed the HPSL programme had been mostly successful in attracting and identifying the type of participants who they aimed to engage. Participants had joined the HPSL programme mostly for an interrelated combination of reasons; specifically, that they agreed with the ethos and objectives of the HPSL programme to help create leaders who are more prepared to close the attainment gap in challenging schools, and saw it as an effective programme to support their own development and career ambitions to lead such schools. In addition, for the most part Residency Heads were very positive about the quality of the individuals on the programme (although a minority reported some slightly and some significantly poorer experiences).

HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 felt the application and assessment process was particularly rigorous in enabling self-reflection for candidates to decide if they were ready for the programme and if this was the right programme for them. This process was also seen to be effective in ensuring those who were more undecided on whether they would achieve a headship in 3-5 years, were subsequently happy that they believed they had the skills and ambition to achieve this.

Residency Heads interviewed in Phase 1 also reported that they had joined the programme for a combination of reasons relating to supporting individual and school improvement; however, these reasons mostly fell in to two categories: 1) to support

an existing member of staff; and 2) to benefit from the networking opportunities and knowledge sharing that the programme would allow. A wider consideration for some was that they believed participation would support to the school's wider strategic objectives by contributing to succession planning.

## **Foundations training**

HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 frequently reported that they had found foundations training to be the most beneficial element of the programme and believed it prepared them for their residency year. The combination and high level of challenge involved in the activities that were undertaken was seen to have been transformative for HPSL participants, both in terms of what was learnt, and what they were capable of. Participants interviewed in Phase 1 also spoke more widely about the motivational aspects of the foundations training, which they saw to be as a result of good quality speakers and role models of respected heads and professionals. This was seen as particularly important amongst those who did not go on to have successful relationships with their Residency Heads. Finally, the impacts of the foundations training being mostly group based were seen as very positive by respondents in Phase 1. HPSL participants felt camaraderie and support from their fellow participants and they reported that this had extended into lasting networks for support.

Most HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 believed that the foundations training performed very well against its 6 core aims and found it challenging to identify areas for further improvement to this element of the programme. However, one area for further development suggested by a small number of HPSL participants was including more examples of practical ways to apply theoretical content in challenging circumstances.

## **Residency**

For the most part those interviewed in Phase 1 saw the residency year as a beneficial experience which they felt had been instrumental in both helping the participant to develop their skills and leadership experience, and in supporting improvements in the residency school. However, Phase 1 interviewees reported varied experiences of residency both from the perspective of participants and Residency Heads, and these experiences were likely to be strongly influenced by their respective views on the other's quality.

Circumstantial barriers were the key challenge experienced by both HPSL participants and Residency Heads in ensuring the success of the year, in particular:

- **Location:** The respective benefits and challenges of staying in their own or going to a different school for residency were debated somewhat evenly amongst HPSL participants. Staying at their current school ensured less time was needed to build new relationships with staff and students; however, some HPSL participants found that the transition from middle to senior leader in a school where they were known meant more time was taken to establish credibility.
- **Availability and input of the Residency Head or Deputy:** Residencies were reported to be most successful when the participant had a good relationship with the Head or their Deputy and received strong support from them (both in terms of the opportunities provided and how they would present and advocate the HPSL programme internally). Where Heads or Deputies were perceived as lacking time to engage with the participant or as not effective role models this was seen to have a negative impact on the year.
- **Activities undertaken:** HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 reported a varying level of exposure to the 6 key residency experiences, with some having had sufficient experience all of them and others having more experience of certain areas than others. Those who had a wider experience of the 6 key areas tended to be more positive about their experience. In addition, the level of responsibility given to the participant was crucial; with some reporting that too much oversight or restriction to what they could do, insufficient support, and a poor relationship with their in-school mentor had damaged their overall experience and effectiveness whilst on their residency.

In terms of the delivery aspects and content of the residency year, the Residency Heads and HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 mostly believed they respectively provided and accessed high levels of support through these methods. The study tour was seen to be particularly effective and beneficial (whether the participant had attended in the US or the UK) element as it provided more practical exposure to different types of schools and approaches. Experiences with mentors and LDA coaches varied depending on the length of time available to spend with them and the quality of the relationships that were developed – as a result these were seen as of varied use by HPSL participants. Many HPSL participants did use the Future Leaders Interactive Portal (FLIP) and reported that they found it a good source of information and a way to stay in touch with networks. However, many did not use this resource as they found the online system to be challenging to use and navigate.

## Post residency

Following the residency year those interviewed in Phase 1 who had progressed into Years 2 and 3 of the HPSL programme reported an overall drop-off both in terms of programme intensity and contact with Future Leaders Trust. They believed this was appropriate as they felt more confident to operate with less support as they had established themselves in their role and their projects in their residency year, and were exploring a range of pathways and opportunities in their current contexts. Some who changed schools following their residency year did report more difficulties following this, especially if their current school was not familiar with the HPSL programme and what they were trying to achieve or was not supportive of the HPSL participant.

The key sources of support in this time were seen to be LDAs and coaches which provided consistency of support over this time. Continued engagement with networks was also seen as very important and those who had been able to do this believed this was very valuable. As such cohort weekends were seen as a useful activity for increasing levels of engagement and enthusiasm.

Use of 'Headship Now!' was limited amongst participants interviewed, but those who had used it had mostly found the resources and support helpful, although a few concerns were raised in that it was not perceived as helpful for those Phase 1 respondents not living in London or the South East.

## Investment in HPSL programme

The investment from HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 was seen to be considerable both in terms of time, money, and emotional commitment. This was mostly evident in the first year of the programme. However, nearly all participants interviewed in Phase 1 felt this investment had been worthwhile and were pleased with the value they had received from the HPSL programme. Those who had not found the investment to be worthwhile had mostly left the programme.

In addition, Residency Heads interviewed in Phase 1 also reported having made considerable investments of time, money, and staff resource on the HPSL programme. Again this was mostly seen as a worthwhile investment and good value for money; however, some believed that further financial investment from the HPSL programme could be directed to the residency school to support them in meeting their offer to participants.

## Learning outcomes

Mostly HPSL participants interviewed in Phase 1 were satisfied that their learning outcomes had been met and credited this success to the HPSL programme and the experiences they had. These outcomes ranged between participants; however, they mostly related either to developing broader knowledge of the management of a school (through learning more about financial management and HR skills); and more personal outcomes such as developing their confidence and projecting credibility as a senior leader.

## Perceptions of the HPSL programme

Through both the qualitative research and document analysis in Phase 1 it was found that HPSL participants and Residency Heads were (with a few exceptions) highly positive about the HPSL programme, and the impact it has had on them and their schools.

Key elements which were reported to be most useful included the foundations training and how it was successful in re-affirming and instilling the key moral objectives and core values of the programme as well as helping participants to develop networks (which are then subsequently beneficial throughout the course of the programme and beyond).

Core areas for further improvement identified include:

- Ensuring that residency schools are receptive to the HPSL programme and its participants to ensure a better experience and higher levels of impact.
- Ensuring that minimum standards of in-school mentorship, in terms of both time and quality, are adhered to, to ensure consistent quality of experience.
- Ensuring protected time to attend HPSL programme activities to ensure that participants are able to take advantage of the opportunities provided.
- Further developing peer networking to ensure this lasts the duration of the programme and beyond.
- Exploring whether the FLIP is fit for purpose as the platform for remote access to the network, since a number of participants felt that it was the single aspect of the HPSL programme which lacked clarity and quality.

- Further tailoring support to ensure that the HPSL programme reflects the experiences and challenges of participants working in all regions in order to fulfil its mission.

## 2. Phase 2: Overall views on the HPSL programme

Most HPSL participants and Residency Heads engaged as part of this research held a positive view of their experience on the HPSL programme, whilst a small minority expressed some negative views. Participants' overarching views of the HPSL programme are discussed in this chapter.

### Programme content

Most of those interviewed strongly believed that the overall content and delivery of the programme was of a high quality; in particular participants valued the support received from their Learning and Development Advisor (LDA) and the networking opportunities the programme provided such as: contacting and exchanging ideas with fellow participants during and after they completed the programme and networking with professionals from other schools (see Chapter 5. Impact on the HPSL Participant, for further details on networking).

The consistency in support and coaching received from the LDA as part of the programme was viewed as highly useful by many of the participants. Nearly all participants suggested that their LDA was easily accessible and provided personalised support and coaching based on their own expertise and the participant's requirements. Support and coaching comprised of constructive feedback and guidance throughout different aspects of the programme including challenging situations. Many participants expressed that the encouragement provided by the LDA was invaluable in that they acted as a major source of support and encouragement throughout the programme and subsequently.

“I think the biggest thing that I found the most positive was us having the LDA, they're there with you when you initially start, at foundation period when you're doing that development, and then throughout. They get feedback. They are quite honest with you about your progress, where you need to go, but also as a support as well. So if you needed to say, 'Okay, I'm not comfortable with this,' or, 'I think there's an issue here,' then that person can kind of follow that through for you”. (Participant)

Networking was also another valued factor by the HPSL participants, with the foundations stage being a particularly useful way of establishing this. Many expressed that during and after the programme they were able to contact colleagues from their network, and exchange ideas for various challenging issues that had arisen in their residency school placements and also in their practice as senior leaders/headteachers. Additionally, most of the HPSL participants also appreciated



the fact that they could be part of a collective network of people from across the country that shared the same fundamental values and missions.

## Programme values

The core values that the programme incorporated<sup>6</sup> were considered as paramount and central to influencing many of the participants' positive perceptions. Many of them expressed that the values inspired them to reform many aspects of their school such as: staffing, culture and pupil attainment. One participant noted that the values and leadership approaches they had learned on the programme were now instilled into their day to day practice and had also been a major influence in inspiring decisions and steps that were taken to set up a new school.

“Going through the staffing of the school, coming up with the name of the school, the vision, the values, being at the heart of it, I think, is the key thing that makes it stand out from any programme. It makes you realise really that the culture of a school, and having a very clear set of visions and values, is absolutely paramount to the success of the school”. (Participant)

Many Participants and Residency Heads reported a high level of satisfaction with the strategies used in the programme to train them. For example; the residency year was viewed as beneficial by most of the HPSL participants as it enabled them to observe good practice and see how theory and skills they had learnt on the programme could be put into practice. Some Participants described the foundations training as helpful. They particularly highlighted the usefulness of using role plays to learn how to handle challenging scenarios and acquiring knowledge on less familiar subjects such as: the function of Human Resources and Finance in a school.

Some Participants attributed their positive perception to a perceived 'fast track' nature of the programme, which had allowed them to progress to senior leadership roles and in some cases headship, sooner than they originally anticipated. This meant that through an intensive and structured training programme participants were able to develop the necessary skills and expertise to develop into competent leaders.

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<sup>6</sup> Programme values included: **Every child** - All children can be successful, regardless of their background; **No excuses** - Every excuse is a step on the road to failure; **High expectations** - Children, staff, schools and communities will live up to the expectations placed upon them; **Lead learning** - The most important things that happen in schools happen in classrooms; and **No islands** - When great school leaders work together, anything is possible.

“It got me into a headship position in less than a year...which is quite unusual, and it managed to do that so quickly, and it since then supported me very effectively to run a very strong school”. (Participant)

A few Participants reported several other positive outcomes that directly resulted from training on the programme. Many experienced an increased level of confidence and self-belief in their leadership abilities and skills. They believed that confidence and self-belief were both fundamental competencies in fulfilling the overall role of a future headteacher, involving a vast array of leadership responsibilities such as: managing staff, leading on finance, human resources and marketing function etc, successfully.

A minority of Participants also reported that they valued the emphasis on equality in the programme and reported an even mix of both males and females taking part. One participant noted that in their experience, given the additional familial responsibilities associated with having young children, women tend to maintain their position in roles that require less leadership responsibilities leading men to occupy more leadership roles in schools. However, on the HPSL programme it was inspiring for them to see and meet with female colleagues who, despite having such commitments pursued their journey to leadership.

“I like the fact that Future Leaders have a large number of women who are on the programme, a large number of women who are going into headship and they’re supporting that. I think that’s really interesting and, kind of, working with people like me who have a young family with children but still have the aspiration to be a Head”. (Participant)

## **Describing the programme**

In order to further ascertain participants’ perceptions of the programme, past and present, Participants took part in a short projective exercise as part of the online focus group discussion.<sup>7</sup> They were asked to describe their experience or journey on the programme to date. There were a wide range of words outlined as shown in Figure 1 below.

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<sup>7</sup> This exercise was used in the focus groups only to stimulate discussion amongst participants, it was not used in the in-depth interviews.

Figure 1: Adjectives used to describe Participants journey



As part of the exercise, Participants were asked to choose one word out of their spontaneous responses. From this, the most common adjective used to describe their journey across Participants was *inspiring*.

This was particularly in relation to the training provided, the quality of the speakers from America and the opportunity the programme provided to network with like-minded professionals.

“It inspires you to go for promotion and helps you to realise that the skills you already have are important and that is possible to work on development areas”. (Participant)

“I mentioned inspiring as Future Leaders made me realise just how much I cared about making a difference”. (Participant)

Other words mentioned included empowering, rewarding and mentally-stimulating. One participant used the word empowering in the context that the programme has

demonstrated they can achieve whatever they put their mind to, a view which was common amongst those who took part in focus groups and in-depth interviews.

“You have a belief that nothing is impossible as a Future Leader”. (Participant)

The words ‘mentally stimulating’ were used in the context of the programme actually making individuals think about how they can make an impact in schools and challenging them to identify the best ways to support pupils in disadvantaged circumstances.

“What we learned and hearing the speakers really made me think about what I believed about education and also the best ways to positively influence pupil progress.” (Participant)

In contrast to this, as well as the positive adjectives, some Participants also used words such as frustrating and challenging to describe their experience. This was typically due to their personal experience in terms of the school they were placed in and challenges with senior members of the team being inflexible to suggestions and change. Interestingly, one participant used the word frustrating in the sense they hoped to do more for their school. The importance of ensuring there is a shared vision between the participant and the senior leadership in their placement school is discussed further in Chapter 6.

“I often felt held back by my school and wanted to implement things/share what I had learned.” (Participant)

The word challenging was used by some to highlight the time and personal sacrifices (such as spending less time with friends and family members) they made during their journey on the programme so far. The most common reason for using this word was to describe the challenge they had with balancing work life with family commitments for example, some having to relocate during their residency year and others commuting longer distances to schools than anticipated.

More positively, one Participant suggested their journey was challenging but in turn it helped them to reach the best of their potential.

“They keep you on your toes, you feel like you are being watched all the time (but in a good way), they have high expectations of you which you strive to meet”. (Participant)

## Areas for improvement

Although the majority of views expressed by Participants and Residency Heads tended to be positive, a small minority did highlight views on aspects of the programme that they felt were weak. Many of these perceptions were associated with negative experiences that Residency Heads went through. The following factors were highlighted as areas of improvement:

- **Usefulness of the training opportunities**

A small minority of participants reported that some aspects of the training were not very useful as they were already knowledgeable around the topics being discussed. For example one participant did not think that attending workshops to learn how to write timetables was relevant to them, and the time could be better used learning about areas where knowledge gaps existed.

- **Opportunities for residency schools to network**

Some Residency Heads expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunity to network with other schools to share best practice. A few believed that it would have been useful to have the opportunity to communicate with other residency schools and discuss how best to work with and utilise participants.

- **Impact initiative support and feedback**

One participant mentioned that the process and quality for evaluating impact initiatives was considered very poor. Although a lot of effort and thought went into designing and developing impact initiatives every year, the feedback only informed the participant whether it was successful or unsuccessful. The participant strongly believed that it would have been useful to receive prompt and constructive feedback, which could aid them in developing more improved and better impact initiatives in their subsequent years during training.

- **Adapting to change**

One Residency Head felt that the HPSL participants they recruited struggled in adapting to change. The Residency Head believed that strategies for school improvement adopted by participants were not always suitable for the needs of their particular school. Therefore, it would have been useful for the participant to focus on carefully planning strategies that are personalised to the needs of individual schools.

“I think sometimes it’s just the issue of something that might work in one place won’t necessarily work here, but that’s something that people learn anyway, to

tailor any change to the context they're actually working in, not just to transplant an initiative wholesale". (Residency Head)

- **Support from Future Leaders Trust**

A few concerns were expressed regarding the support and communication received from the Future Leaders Trust. One Residency Head reported a lack of support from the Future Leaders Trust with regards to challenges that their participant was experiencing.

"We were very much left to get on with it really, and I felt that there should have been some additional support for her, in fact, because she was struggling with leadership. I called a meeting and did ask what support they were going to put in place for her, as a participant, over and above the coaching and between the LDA meetings. None was forthcoming and I felt that she was let down by that process really, and I felt as a school, quite let down by it". (Residency Head)

On the other hand a small number of Participants noted that poor communication by the Future Leaders Trust in some instances lead to training sessions being missed, suggesting processes around communications could be further improved.

### 3. Phase 2: Motivations for joining the HPSL programme

The HPSL participants were motivated by a range of different factors to join the programme, including social motivations, external influences, anticipated career development and progression and personal/skills related growth. These factors were often interrelated; for example, career progression was not solely about climbing the career ladder to reach headship, but also a means of being able to have a greater influence and bringing about school improvement.

#### Social motivations

The majority of participants were influenced by their determination to support disadvantaged children and young people in various ways such as closing the attainment gap, promoting social justice, and ensuring equality in education and moral purpose. Thus many of those interviewed mentioned that their personal core values were at the heart of, and in line with the aims of the HPSL programme.

Some of the HPSL participants discussed their personal experiences of previously working in schools where they felt disappointed and frustrated with the pessimistic attitude staff members had towards young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore they received satisfaction from making a personal difference in changing people's attitudes.

“I always got more satisfaction from working in areas of deprivation, but got really cross with people's attitudes of, ‘Oh, these kids, you know, they're never going to achieve because they're from here’. So I get personal satisfaction from trying to make a difference and changing people's attitudes”.

(Participant)

Whilst many of the HPSL participants were motivated to improve practices in challenging schools to support the increased attainment of young people; some highlighted that through their experience of working in leadership roles in challenging schools they were also able to extend their impact and influences to the local community.

“As a head you have the power to make decisions that will influence not only the pupils, staff or school but also the community. If the attainment of pupils of a particular demographic is improving, this in turn has a knock on effect to the wider future of that demographic”. (Participant)



Alignment to the moral purpose and core values of the programme was also cited by many participants. In particular, the 'Future Leaders ethos' had struck a chord with some who had grown up in deprived areas. Some of the HPSL participants discussed their personal experiences of being socially disadvantaged, or their family/friends dropping out of education. These factors inspired many of the HPSL participants to ensure that young people involved in education do not experience similar situations whereby their postcode dictates their life chances.

Therefore they wanted to be part of a movement which provided all children and young people with good education that does not make excuses based on people's backgrounds and promotes equality. They wanted to do the best for pupils in challenging schools.

"My two brothers dropped out of school at an early age. I am from a poor, disadvantaged background, I guess. So, I wanted to make sure that whoever I taught, or whoever I teach, didn't go through the same stages as my brothers did and as my friends did". (Participant)

## Skills development

Many of the participants reported that they felt motivated to join the programme due to their determination to continuously improve and learn the appropriate skills for leadership. Most participants were relatively new to leadership and thus wanted to learn the skills that were necessary. On the other hand, a few Participants had experience of working in leadership roles and hoped for the programme to reaffirm their capabilities and skills. Lastly, one participant expressed uncertainty with regards to personal suitability for leadership and believed that the programme would enable increased confidence in themselves and their skills. A mixture of current and past participants were aware of various skills that they wished to develop and improve before they commenced the programme, these included:

- General leadership skills
- Understanding other people's point of view before making decisions
- Knowledge and usage of data
- Other school functions e.g. finance and human resources

The extent to which the programme helped individuals to develop the skills identified is explored further in Chapter 5.



The majority of Participants wanted to develop their knowledge and skills on general leadership approaches and practices. This included awareness and realisation of the type of leadership style or leadership personality the participant may have, but also what the overarching leadership requirements of a headteacher may comprise in different contexts. As a few of the Participants had not worked in a challenging school prior to joining the programme, they wanted to learn about the different skills that would be relevant and specific to leading in this particular environment.

Some of the Participants recognised that the ability to understand staff member's and pupil's points of view was an essential component of leadership. They acknowledged that at times, there could be reasons why people may not respond to delegated tasks or responsibilities efficiently/effectively, and it is important to learn the skills to be able to identify these reasons. Part of understanding staff member's and pupil's point of view, in the participants' opinion, involved being able to empathise with people, and in doing so, being able to problem solve effectively given the specific situation they could be experiencing or involved in.

“One was probably trying to have a bit more empathy with other people. I've always been very driven and thought things should be done my way, but I certainly recognise that I need to learn a bit more about taking on board what others have to say before making decisions and you know, like I said, empathising with other people who there might be a reason why they're not doing as you've asked. There might be a reason why they're not performing as you want them to, instead of using my approach before where, I would probably just hold them to account, and bark at them and say, 'This needs to be done better'”. (Participant)

As mentioned previously, the majority of the participants were driven to learn about the different aspects involved in the role of a headteacher. Some of these aspects included: involvement and knowledge of data, governance, special education needs (SEN), school culture, and other functions such as finance and human resources.

“I was obviously very new to senior leadership, so I had a lot of learning to do. I guess it was to broaden my horizons about the different aspects of senior leadership, and to find out things about SEN, which was part of my weaknesses, data, things like HR, budget, hiring, and I think the most important thing that I learned about was about school culture, and how to really create a positive school culture”. (Participant)

## External motivations

In terms of external influences, the Participants interviewed mentioned a range of different sources that motivated them to join the programme. Participants read information about the programme in education press and external advertisements such as the Times Educational Supplement and also received emails from education websites such as eTeach. Some of the Participants had participated in teaching schemes such as Teach First and middle leadership training, where they were also made aware of the programme.

Generally, some Participants stated that they were drawn to the information they read about the HPSL programme. The overall vision and aims of the programme were in line with their core values in wanting to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people, by developing into an influential leader.

Many of the participants were influenced by colleagues and their headteachers at the time, who recommended the programme to them. Some of these colleagues were existing or previous participants in the programme and they offered insight into their experiences and shared positive feedback which contributed to the reinforcement of their decisions to join the HPSL programme.

“Just talking to that person and working with that person made me realise that this is the right thing for me and it would have a massive impact on my professional development. Also making me, hopefully, accelerate and open my eyes to being able to do things like promotions and stuff that I don’t think I would have had the confidence to do otherwise. I certainly don’t think I would be in this job now”. (Participant)

## Personal and career development

Some of the Participants joined the programme with the view to develop their career. A few of these Participants felt that traditional methods to progress took significantly longer, as many headteachers held the subconscious view that candidates need to have reached a certain age or supposed level of maturity to become a head. Therefore, some participants were drawn to what they saw as the accelerated nature of the programme to reach leadership as it enabled them to achieve their goal in 3-5 years. In the case of one NQT joining the programme, they progressed to senior leadership, without the requirement to have several years of teaching or teaching related leadership experience.

“When I saw this email I thought, ‘they’ll probably think it’s ridiculous that as an NQT, I’m putting myself forward’ I did expect someone was going to turn

around and say, 'Stop wasting our time,' but every time I got through the next process. There was the telephone interview a rigorous application form before that, and then when I went down to the assessment centre, it really tested your competencies. I came out of the assessment centre, and I thought, 'I've absolutely nailed that'". (Participant)

The HPSL participants provided various reasons as to why they wanted to progress. Some Participants felt that senior leadership and headship roles would enable them to have more influence in achieving their objectives e.g. closing the attainment gap in schools. As a head in a school their role would enable them to be in a position where they could have greater say and be able to act upon their observations, especially in their determination to eliminate poor working practices.

"Schools in need of good leadership and schools with disadvantaged students. So it's trying to close the gap really, but be in a position to actually lead a school to do so and not just have to watch. I think as well I watched my leadership team. I wasn't as influential as I could be, because I was on the extended leadership team, and I really wanted to have a greater say. I saw decisions being made which I didn't think were great at times, and I felt that helped drive me on to think, 'Right, I've got to try and get onto the leadership scale on a higher level, assistant head level, and I think the Future Leaders will help'". (Participant)

A minority of Participants also mentioned feeling motivated by the raise in pay that was associated and would come with progression to a leadership role.

## 4. Phase 2: Impact on the participant

The research explored the specific impacts that the HPSL programme had on its participants. The following chapter discusses the key perceived impacts reported by those consulted.

### Impact on skills and personal development

Participants interviewed highlighted numerous areas in which they believed their skills had developed as a result of the programme, including growth in general competencies as leaders, an increase in self-confidence and resilience.

Many of the HPSL participants believed that the programme enabled them to grow and develop their leadership skills to a level appropriate for senior leadership. Many of them commented on specific leadership modules or teaching that took place which enabled them to enhance their skills and work on strengthening their existing areas of expertise.

The fact that participants were given the opportunity to put the theory and skills learnt into practice was also highlighted as a significant feature of the programme that allowed them to build their confidence. Some Participants also felt that the programme enabled them to learn knowledge and skills around unfamiliar areas, such as finance, human resources and use of data. These aforementioned elements of the HPSL programme enabled them to showcase their skill set confidently and perform well during interviews.

In addition to learning skills and competencies, the encouragement and support received from the LDA also had a major part to play in building the participants' confidence. This has led to Participants feeling more confident about their competencies and as a result many report that they perform better during interview situations and in their senior leadership roles.

“The competencies really helped to support that because when I applied for my permanent position one of the interviews I had was a visions and values interview. Having had the training on Future Leaders and understanding the competencies meant that I was able to reflect better on the questions”.

(Participant)

Some Participants believed that they had underestimated the knowledge and skills that are required to become an effective head; however, since taking part in the programme their understanding has now broadened. A few participants reported that they are now aware of various challenges that they had never imagined that heads

could be faced with and potential strategies to problem solve. Some Participants noted that prior to joining the programme they did not value the importance of skills such as empathy, understanding, self-awareness and patience, but now realise that these skills are key as a head in the school due to the responsibility of having to work with such a variety of stakeholders and manage any arising conflicts.

“I think my attitude towards headship was like it would require me doing lots of different operational things. But I realised that it’s a lot bigger than that and it involves so much more”. (Participant)

## **Change in understanding of leadership approaches**

Most participants reported a change or refinement in their understanding of leadership in various ways. Many of them mentioned that the programme has enabled them to broaden their understanding of leadership and think about school processes on a more holistic level inclusive of staff, pupils, and community.

Some mentioned now having a better appreciation of how much thought and strategic planning goes into the decisions made by leaders in school, and thus the requirement to be accountable and responsible for their actions. A small minority of participants reported that originally they saw headship as a means to gaining power and authority; however since taking part in the programme their view has changed to now believing that headship is more about taking responsibility for the entire performance and reputation of the school.

"I think that I see it as, a section of it now is much more that it’s my responsibility to be a leader because I’m capable of it, rather than before, I think I had personal motivations about power, I think". (Participant)

Furthermore, some Participants reported that the programme enabled them to think more clearly in that leadership cannot operate individualistically as it requires people to work collectively towards a shared goal. Some Participants originally took the responsibility upon themselves to lead on major changes; however, since the programme they have realised that part of leadership involves enabling others to lead and also taking responsibility and working towards an overarching vision.

“It has enabled me to think very clearly about the leadership. It’s not just I leading; it’s about me enabling others to lead. Which is key if you want to change the system, you can’t do it on your own you have to develop an army of people around you to do that”. (Participant)

Interestingly a small number of the HPSL participants interviewed highlighted that their general understanding of leadership in schools remained unchanged; however,

their understanding of leadership specific to challenging schools did change. For example, one participant initially believed that leadership in challenging schools revolved around addressing poor behaviour and disciplinary issues, but soon realised that it involves an array of other things such as raising aspirations and working with the wider community.

On the other hand a minority of Participants believed that through previous career experiences they had already gained comprehensive experience of leadership, thus their understanding did not change.

## **Readiness for headship**

Most participants reported a change in their attitudes and readiness for headship and many of them felt that their motivation to become a head had increased. Some attributed this to being part of a vision to make a difference to young people's lives that was shared by fellow participants, and reinforced through the programme.

Of the HPSL participants who had become heads most reported that the programme influenced the time they believed it would take them to reach headship. Prior to the programme, they thought it would take significantly longer to reach headship (more than 5 years), due to their own observations and perceptions that governors were more likely to place emphasis on a candidate's length of experience rather than specific skills. However, by the end of foundations training, and over the course of the residency year, participant's beliefs about what was possible changed. Many Participants believed the programme allowed them realise that headship is a lot more attainable than they originally envisaged, and fundamentally progression is dependent on own skills and abilities.

"I feel like I've got the skill set and the support to be able to do it in the future whereas before that, I thought you had to be a certain age and you had to have all this experience, and you needed to have done certain things and that's not the case at all". (Participant)

Many Participants grew in confidence about their skills and abilities to progress into senior leadership and headship roles. This was mainly due to the strong skill set, coaching and encouragement they had received from participating in the programme. Most of the HPSL participants therefore expected to and in many instances had reached headship within 2-5 years of starting the programme.

A mixture of views were reported regarding the point at which they believed they would be ready for headship. Some Participants felt ready during the programme, whilst others felt more prepared after completing the entire programme. Some Participants stated that other aspects of their life e.g. children and family, were of a

higher priority currently as they were not in a rush to reach headship (but wanted to start the process of developing the required skills), or had very recently had children. A minority expressed ambivalence and were unclear about an exact time when they would feel ready for headship, despite gaining the skills and experience. They felt that it was difficult to feel a clear sense of readiness and believed that it was something that would come with time.

## **Impact on progression into senior leadership and headship**

All of the HPSL participants interviewed had managed to secure a senior leadership role during their time on the programme as per the requirement, and had either continued in this or entered other senior roles after completing the programme.

Most Participants who had completed the programme believed that it aided them in securing senior leadership and headship. Some, who had moved from middle leader positions, believed that without the HPSL programme they would not otherwise have enough experience at that time to have achieved headship. Most felt that they would have reached senior leadership eventually, but that it would have taken them longer. Some participants were already working as senior leaders when they were accepted onto the programme; for those Participants it was about helping them to further develop their leadership skills and to progress to headship.

One participant, who had been an assistant head prior to Participants secured headship at their school within one and half years of years of joining the programme and they credited Participants with this fast progression.

Those who had achieved headship attributed their success to the support and learning they received during the programme as well as the support they continued to receive after completing the programme. Most of them believed that it would have taken them a significantly longer amount of time to secure headship had they not participated in the programme.

“I would not be a headteacher right now if it wasn’t for the training and support that I got from the programme. It was fantastic and I am where I am today because of it”. (Participant)

Some Participants had progressed quite quickly from assistant head or other senior teaching roles to deputy head or head, and felt that the programme had been largely responsible for this, both in terms of skills, confidence and also practical support with applications and interviews. Many felt that they would have made this transition without the programme eventually, but that it would have taken longer for them to develop the skills and the confidence that the programme had given them.

Participants also mentioned that networking was an important part of the programme which contributed in leading them to secure senior leadership roles. Networking with people enabled them to share best practice, application and interview tips with one another and as a result put them into practice to secure senior leadership roles. Additionally Participants networked with headteachers that they had worked with before, some were given the opportunity to return to the school with the offer of securing a senior leadership role after completing the HPSL programme.

Many of the HPSL participants interviewed reported receiving advice and support around ways to improve how they communicated and presented their skills in applications for jobs. Some Participants also mentioned using their network of fellow colleagues on the programme as a means to use each other's advice and experience to prepare for interviews. Many Participants noted that their LDA offered useful advice and guidance on CVs and personal statements, and offered constructive feedback. Additionally they mentioned having mock interviews as part of the programme. As a result, they were able to make improvements to their applications and practice their interview skills which maximised the chances of securing senior leadership roles. Participants did not mention receiving such support from sources other than the HPSL programme.

“I think the mock interview that we had, and the mock letter of application that we had to do for Future Leaders, definitely put me in a much, much better position. To be able to (a) apply for the position and (b) understand how to answer the questions. Definitely, 100%, that was really, really positive”.  
(Participant)

## **Barriers to securing headship**

Some Participants felt that there may still be barriers to them securing headship, and some believed that they had encountered these already, which was why they were not yet heads some years after joining the programme.

Several Participants mentioned family commitments being a barrier to securing headship; a few of these acknowledged that support was available to them through the Women in Headship programme. Some stated that they wanted to strike a balance between work and family life, and felt that they were in no rush to take on a high level of responsibility just yet. Many stated that they had young families, and that this had meant, in the case of the women, that they had needed to take time out of work to have children. One participant expressed that having a child was a barrier to securing headship as it was not the right time to take on such a commitment.



“With a young family, I think I’m maybe a little bit further away than I initially thought and wasn’t interested or really ready, realistically, when they put the posting for the headship at my previous school. I was just coming off of maternity leave and I was like, ‘Yes. No way, it’s not the right time”.

(Participant)

A few of the participants, usually those who were 30 or under, believed that their age could be a potential barrier. They felt that they would be perceived by others as being too young to be a credible head and thus would assume a lack of experience, especially because traditionally heads tend to have several years of experience. A small number of the HPSL participants believed that conveying maturity and the core values learnt as part of the HPSL programme during interviews could potentially aid in diminishing such barriers.

“I think people maybe struggle to take you seriously...if I was going for a headship now and I’m 30, then I don’t know how many people would take me seriously. Most heads tend to be in their 50s”. (Participant)

A minority of Participants felt that a lack of opportunities in certain locations was a barrier to their success in securing headship. Locations in the North of England and more rural areas were identified as places where limited posts were advertised for headship positions. One participant struggled to find vacancies for headship positions in challenging schools within preferred locations to settle down.

A small number of the female Participants believed that their gender was a barrier to securing headship. It was felt that senior positions such as headship are typically occupied by males, and other less senior positions such as teachers and teaching assistants are typically occupied by females. However, some did acknowledge support available such as the Women in Headship course to be useful in trying to overcome this barrier.

“There are a lot of women in the Future Leaders programme, you know, I mean, especially for someone who is on the senior leadership team in a primary school. Primary schools generally are largely staffed by women teachers, women teaching assistants, but then you often still will find, you know, a male head”. (Participant)

A few Participants felt that a lack of social diversity amongst heads could potentially be a barrier. They held the belief that only cities and locations that had an equal representation of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) groups, would offer a reasonable opportunity to be successful in a job interview for the role of a Head. It was observed that BAME colleagues that had entered headship had usually secured positions in ethnically diverse locations such as Birmingham, Manchester or

Leicester. One participant was unable to identify ways to overcome this barrier, except to avoid applications to schools in locations where there is a lack of ethnic diversity.

“I can’t go and become a head in Cornwall. I can only become a Head in the community where there’s a representation of my culture. I’m from a BME, I’m Indian. I will not be able to go and lead a school in a Talented Leaders programme in Scunthorpe or, you know, Exeter or somewhere know that because I see my peers that have tried, and I know the leaders I’ve worked under. Where are they working? They’re working in a place where there is a representation of their community”. (Participant)

## 5. Phase 2: Impact initiatives

One of the key ways in which the HPSL programme aimed to have an impact on schools was by requiring participants to undertake an 'impact initiative', a project designed and delivered by the participant in their school to achieve a positive outcome. The impact initiative should be designed to have a measurable impact on the school, and be agreed and signed off by the participant's Residency Head. Progress is reported back to the Future Leaders Trust through a reporting form.

Analysis of 100 Impact Initiative forms shows that the goals for each initiative had a strong focus on increasing attainment, with this being the most typical type of goal set. Some of these goals related specifically to closing the attainment gap between those entitled to pupil premium funding and those that are not.

"To narrow the gap in achievement in Y10 between students eligible for Pupil Premium and those who are not." (Participant)

The second most common goal among the Impact Initiatives selected for analysis was improving Teaching and Learning, followed by a focus on the improvement of literacy. A further few related to behaviour management, for example to improve consistency, update behaviour policy and streamline School Information Management Systems (SIMS) in order to ensure accurate data collection and timely follow up of both positive and negative behaviour events. Another participant specifically mentioned the desire to reduce the percentage of fixed term and permanent exclusions. Others mentioned attendance and marking, feedback and target setting as their focus.

"Improve marking and feedback to ensure there is high-quality practice taking place consistently across all departments in school." (Participant)

"To ensure students are provided with effective feedback and targets." (Participant)

A small number of Participants had progress mapping and data tracking as part of their Initiative goals, such as improving use of data or introducing new methods of measuring performance. A further few mentioned timely and effective intervention, and quality and consistency of setting and completion of homework. Another initiative goal highlighted was the establishment of the learning partnership programme.

A number of Participants mentioned specific groups of pupils targeted through these initiative goals: several specifically mentioned key stage 4, or GCSEs, and some mentioned key stage 3 or years 7, 8 or 9. A few commented on improvements relating specifically to key stage 1 and a small number highlighted key stage 5, with

a further few specifically drawing attention to Post-16 provision. Pupil Premium pupils were mentioned by a few Participants when describing their initiative goals, while a small number drew attention to the most able pupils.

In terms of academic subjects mentioned in outlining these initiative goals, English and Maths were most commonly mentioned as areas where they were targeting improvement. In addition, some mentioned Literacy, a small number mentioned science, and there were single mentions of numeracy and e-learning.

## **Rationale behind initiative goals**

Several key themes emerged in participants' explanations of the rationale behind their initiative goal and focus area. One of these themes is that it is something that was identified as an area of improvement for the school, with several Participants noting this. For some it was purely identified as an area for focus by the head, while for others it became apparent as a result of an Ofsted inspection. Similar to this, another rationale some mentioned was that the Impact Initiative is directly aligned to the whole school improvement plan.

“Contributes directly to a significant strand of the whole school improvement plan as directed by the head and utilises the skills and experience from my previous role.” (Participant)

Another important rationale highlighted was to achieve improvement in attainment, or to increase A\*-C grades. While others mentioned data driving the choice of goal, including analysis of school performance data, comparisons against the national average, other data analysis or, in one case, Fischer Family Trust data.

“Fischer Family Trust data (2012) shows that pupils make the most progress at key stage 4 in English and Maths and highlights the disparity in the progress made by pupils between both key stages.” (Participant)

One participant mentioned collecting student feedback as part of the rationale, while a few described the need to introduce a restructure, implementing a new initiative or a change generally. In a few cases the participant specified the need to increase the quality of teaching and learning.

“The rationale behind my chosen Impact Initiative is to raise the quality of teaching and learning at the academy, in order to ensure that all of our children receive quality first teaching, which facilitates every child to make accelerated progress.” (Participant)

A few highlighted that the area in which the school resides has a poor reputation and as such wants to close the gap between free school meals (FSM)/pupil premium and

other pupils, and develop aspirations for all students. The need to change learner mindsets, the school ethos, or learner-teacher working experiences was mentioned by a few of the participants.

“This is an area within school that needs to be improved as there is a culture of low-aspiration and many students not presenting a positive attitude towards their learning.” (Participant)

## Targets set

As part of the programme, Participants are required to set a minimum of two targets to measure their impact on the school and they can record up to a maximum of three targets. The targets are not ranked in order of importance and are meant to capture different aspects of the impact they may have.

There were no targets outlined for five of the selected Participants with the remaining Participants (95) outlining at least 2 targets on the form. A further two thirds of Participants (68) outlined a third target.

The targets set varied by participant and thus school but have been categorised into broad themes. In many instances the broad theme of the target mainly remained consistent across the three target areas with a focus on a different subject or year for each target.

The main themes for the targets, which are closely linked, focused on improving student grades or progression with 114 instances of this being mentioned, and improving the quality of teaching with 78 targets mentioning improvements related to this.

“75% of students to achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A\*- C including English and Maths.” (Participant)

“Improve the quality of teaching in English and Maths to ensure that 90% is typically Good or better.” (Participant)

Targets relating to the standard of teaching tended to be generic and related to all subjects. However, the most popular subject focus for targets relating to attainment were Maths and English, with frequent mentions of science also.

As can be expected, the focus for this target varied depending on school type and phase with Participants setting targets for various years (1 through to 11 and post 16), key stages (1 to 4), grades (GCSE's, AS, A-Level), gender (boys and girls) and special educational needs (SEN and non-SEN). There were also targets for those eligible for FSM and those who are most able.

“100% of most able pupils to achieve 3 levels of progress in all subjects and 75% to achieve 4 levels of progress in English and Maths.” (Participant)

Other themes that came out of the targets include improving the reading age of pupils and raising the level of attendance. A few Participants aimed to improve the accuracy of predictions in exam results, with a few of these specifying key stage 4. A few Participants aimed to improve/develop systems and policies and a further few aimed to reduce the Pupil Premium or attainment gap. A few Participants aimed to improve feedback and marking and a few have set a target to reduce the number of incidents that lead to exclusions. A small number revealed the aim to increase the use of e-learning, while others want to develop a culture of reading within the school.

“To build up an ethos of reading within school and encourage reading for pleasure”. (Participant)

## **Outcome of initiatives**

Participants interviewed in depth believe they are making leadership choices in schools to make changes that directly contribute to the achievement of better outcomes for pupils in the challenging schools that they are working in. The impact initiative forms demonstrate that wherever possible these statements are generally backed up by credible evidence about the changes in outcomes and often relate directly to achievement, though not always for the headline school performance measures.

The Impact Initiative Form requires Participants to provide a baseline for their target along with their progression in March and June and an outcome of the target. Participants are also asked to self-report whether they feel their target has been achieved – however, analysis found this measure was inconsistently completed in the forms selected.

The target outcomes were therefore analysed by BMG along with the initial target and the baseline to determine whether the target was met or not, and if not, the extent to which it had made improvements. A total of 178 individual targets and associated outcomes were available for analysis in this way, and the remainder had either not provided sufficient or sufficiently evidenced baseline or outcome information to enable this assessment. This is not necessarily a criticism of the impact initiative forms, as these are intended to be used by the participant to measure and reflect on their own progress.

Whether a target was met or not very much depended on the level of ambition of the initial target set, with some Participants expecting 100% improvements and other Participants expecting smaller increases. It should also be noted that where the

targets set were specifically related to percentage increases, they could therefore more easily be demonstrated as either being achieved or improving (despite not achieving the initial percentage set). For example, one target was to improve the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C grades including maths and English from 54.1% to 70.0% and the outcome was that 81% achieved 5 A\*-C grades including maths and English. However, some other targets set did not specifically relate to a measurement and are therefore less easy to demonstrate if met or not in a quantifiable way, but evidence was provided to show progress. For example:

Target: “Through staff training establish an understanding from all teaching staff of what high-quality written feedback is.” (Participant)

Outcome: “I led whole-staff training on marking and feedback. I went through the key principles and research behind effective written feedback. The chief focus of the training was on students being provided with feedback that would allow them to improve their work.” (Participant)

The following table shows the number of targets and outcomes analysed that were achieved, exceeded, partially achieved, or missed (with no signs of improvement). In the case of 60% of the targets these were either achieved (43%) or exceeded (17%), whilst a further third (34%) of the targets had been partially met. Only 6% had of the targets had been missed with no signs of improvement.

**Table 3 Outcomes of impact initiatives**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Achieved target	77	43%
Exceeded target	30	17%
Partially achieved target	60	34%
Missed (with no signs of improvement)	11	6%
<b>Total targets</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: BMG Research

Nearly two thirds (65%) of the 100 participants whose impact initiative forms were analysed had met or exceeded at least one of their targets; a further 32% had partially achieved at least one of their targets. Only 3% had not achieved or partially achieved any of their targets.

The main area in which targets had either been achieved or exceeded was in implementing and embedding specific policies and systems (which did not have specific achievement or attainment percentages linked to them). Over one quarter

(28%) of the achieved or exceeded targets were related to such activities. Examples of this include:

Target: "Improve the consistency of homework set to students in KS3 so that all students are set the same number of homeworks across a two week period." (Participant)

Outcome: "Homework is being set in line with the school homework policy. This was not the case before." (Participant)

Target: "To develop a new system to allocate Pupil Premium funding which will include a process to evaluate and record impact of all initiatives on all students involved." (Participant)

Outcome: "Produced a new system which allows all members of staff to take an initiative to use pupil premium funding. It has accountability and evaluation embedded within." (Participant)

The second main area in which targets had either been achieved or exceeded was the improvement of teachers, nearly a quarter (23%) of all successful targets were related to this. Of these over half related to improving teacher's classroom performance, and a fifth related to improving marking and feedback to learners. Such improvements were notable, with participants reporting high levels of and high increases in good and outstanding classroom assessments - on many occasions totalling more than 80% on a subject specific and school wide basis (having increased by between 15% and 100% depending on the school).

Of those targets that were achieved or exceeded, one in ten (11%) had helped ensure improvements in pupil's attainment at GCSE (in a range of subjects but most notably Maths and English); a further 11% had improved the use of data within schools; 6% had ensured an improvement in outcomes for learners in key stage 3 (including increasing reading ages, in some cases by up to 2 years); a small amount had improved pupil behaviour (5%) and pupil attendance (5%).

As noted previously, a third of participants had not met any of their targets, but there was often not a large gap in what had been achieved compared with what was remaining, for example, one participant set the target for 80% of students to achieve 3 levels of progress in English, and the outcome achieved was 79%.

In some cases it was acknowledged by participants that they had set an ambitious target to start with, and as such not reaching this was not overly disappointing as they had still achieved considerable impacts. It is worth noting that the targets



relating to the implementation of systems and policies were less likely to have been partially achieved (5% compared with 28% of those who met or exceeded their targets), suggesting that less tangible targets which are reliant on many other influences may be more challenging to successfully achieve.

A fifth (22%) of partially met targets related to improvements in pupil's attainment at GCSE (in a range of subjects but most notably Maths and English); 20% related to improving teacher's practice; and 12% related to improving learner outcomes across key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Where targets were not met participants related this to a range of issues including wider contextual factors within the school (such as changes to the curriculum, existing policies, or approaches to data collection) and changes to the participant's role in the school.

"This was an area that I didn't have as much involvement in as I expected to at the start of the year." (Participant)

"As my job remit moved from Teaching and Learning to pastoral in the final term. I did, however, interview and appoint a new team to lead the coaching programme." (Participant)

## 6. Phase 2: Impact on the school and pupils

The interviews also explored the impacts that the HPSL participants and their work had on the schools they worked within (both during and post residency), and the pupils within the schools. The following chapter discusses the key perceived impacts reported by those consulted.

### Challenges in the school

The specific challenges faced by the interviewed Participants and Residency Heads in schools can be summarised as:

- A high turnover and poor leadership of heads
- Lack of training and development of staff
- Poor pupil performance across schools including low attainment and failing results in core subjects
- Low Ofsted ratings

The majority of Participants interviewed outlined that a high turnover of heads proved to be a challenge in their residency school as members of staff lacked stable management and strategic direction. Poor leadership from heads was also an issue in that it had a knock-on effect on teachers and pupils in the school.

“It was only one class, she let everything go, she let the parents walk in when they wanted to, she didn’t combat punctuality, attendance, it wasn’t important to her, whereas I wanted to set it up as a friendly community school, but we have non-negotiables here.” (Participant)

“The leadership [in participant’s residency school] was just the most dysfunctional leadership I’ve ever come across in any school ever and ever likely to come across again.” (Participant)

The vast majority of Residency Heads and Participants also mentioned the lack of training and development of staff as a challenge in their school and an area they wanted HPSL programme support in. Around half of the Residency Heads suggested this as one of the reasons for acquiring an HPSL participant in their school, particularly to help improve the performance of teachers and teaching assistants. Some Participants mentioned the recognition of lack of motivation and low staff morale when joining the school.

Poor pupil performance was identified as a key challenge impacting almost all schools in which the interviewed Participants had completed their residency year. This included low attainment, poor behaviour, failing results in core subjects such as English and Maths which resulted in low Ofsted ratings. Some Participants mentioned that although they were aware they were going into the school to prioritise improvements and make an impact, in some cases it was difficult to identify where the focus should be. Ofsted ratings were a driver for some as explained below.

“Within the second week of being there, they had an Ofsted inspection, and the school went into 'requires improvement'. Basically they had lots of things that needed to be changed, but one of the things was to do with curriculum, so the curriculum wasn't fit for purpose. It was advantageous for me, because at first I thought, 'Oh, I don't know where I'm going to be able to fit in', but once they had that Ofsted judgement, I was able to get, sort of, an audience with the Head and say, 'Well, from my observations over the last couple of weeks, these are the things that I feel that I could help to support the school.’”  
(Participant)

Taking these challenges into consideration, it was clear from the depth interviews that the focus of both Residency Heads and Participants was to improve the quality of the school through identification of the relevant training requirements for teachers, ensuring students had the best quality teachers and a better understanding of the schools vision, mission and values at a senior level. In some instances improved teaching was also recognised as a contributing factor for schools in achieving higher Ofsted ratings.

## **Impacts of Participant son the challenges in schools**

The reported impacts of Participants varied to some extent, although the overarching impact reported amongst most was the improvement in pupil's grades on core subjects and improved teaching through various methods. Foremost amongst these were training and coaching. Carrying out observations and providing feedback were also considered imperative for the development of staff.

Most Residency Heads suggested their participant was able to use the skills and knowledge learned from other schools and the HPSL programme to share best practice with senior members of the team as well as teachers. One Residency Head mentioned this had a strong contribution to the development of staff.

“Well, specifically, it's made a very strong contribution to the professional development of the staff. The people who have been on Future Leaders have benefitted enormously. They've also very rapidly brought added capacity to

our senior team, and it's helped develop other leaders in the team, who have seen what they've been doing and have benefitted from the ideas, resources and skills that they've come back with. Because they've been faster at developing into effective senior leaders, the impact on their day-to-day jobs has been significant as well." (Residency Head)

The majority of Participants expressed their improved ability to deal with difficult situations and have difficult conversations with members of the team as a result of the training received on the programme. Most agreed the programme had provided them with the confidence to be able to observe teachers and suggest areas of improvements, for example through training, feedback on their teaching style and their performance with pupils, when necessary.

"I think that in the past, I found it quite difficult challenge some established members of staff, i.e. been in the school for a long time. Challenging them on a behaviour that they have been exhibiting for a long time is difficult, but through Future Leaders I developed skills and confidence to be able to do this and control the after effects; when you know that what you are going to do is cause a bit of ripple effect, you are able to plan; address the problem and move forward." (Participant)

Some Participants also reported that the support from the HPSL programme had enabled them to provide better support generally to other members of staff to help them improve their practice. One participant provided an example of how they were able to use the skills from the programme to develop staff leading to a number of promotions.

"I think a lot of the development of staff that I've done this year has had an impact on the school. We've had several members of staff being promoted as they've evolved, becoming more involved and more secure in their own leadership as well. I've been able to, actually as part of the senior leadership team, explore with them the importance of creating, you know, a strong culture, and how you would go about having a vision, and having values, and communicating that to them as well." (Participant)

Many Participants outlined that their residency year, the support from their LDA, and the time spent in coaching groups on the programme was imperative in enabling them to deliver impacts in their school. Most believed these elements combined enabled them to change the culture of the school they were working in. For example, increasing their self-awareness of dealing with school challenges, understanding change management, developing leadership skills and identifying areas of the curriculum where their strengths lie to have the biggest impact on pupil's attainment.

“Future Leaders has helped me to be more aware of what the issues were. I don’t think I really understood that there were that many issues within my school until I joined Future Leaders. Then, you know, we had all of the training in effective leadership, and change management, effective training of staff and then, obviously, speaking to other Future Leader participants. It opened my eyes to the fact that there were issues in my school. It made me really aware of that, I think, and better able to deal with those issues.” (Participant)

## Key impacts of the participant on the school

Participants mentioned a number of impacts they had on their school as a result of the programme. The biggest impacts across all those interviewed can be summarised as:

- Better quality of teaching and learning staff
- Improving progression of students (including attainment of grades, behaviour and performance).
- Supporting the development of a stronger leadership team
- Developing goals visions and values for the school
- Raising the profile of the school (e.g. through Ofsted ratings)

As outlined earlier, the lack of training and high quality staff was considered a limitation in most schools. Some suggested their focus and role in the school was specifically around teaching and learning which involved recognising gaps in individual’s teaching skills through a range of activities including dialogue and interactions with teachers and practice oral presentations and discussions. They also assessed individual’s written work, knowledge and understanding of their core subject areas, and setting goals within a personal learning plan to address the areas of improvement. These methods were incorporated based on what they had learnt on the programme and their understanding of the role of coaching. The outcome of this, as suggested by some was they were able to improve the level of teaching and learning across the school ensuring it was consistently good.

The improvements in teaching also had an influence on other aspects of school operations such as the motivation of pupils, improved behaviour and better grades. Many Participants and Residency Heads mentioned the significant improvements in pupil’s grades supported raising the profile of the school, as noted by the participant and Residency Head in the following school.

“Academic achievement had increased significantly in each of the three schools I’ve worked in, well beyond the programme. We’ve been one of the most improved schools in our area...we have leapfrogged 44 schools in our area on GCSE attainment and progress. We’ve got the best value-added in the area. So I think, really, the biggest impact has been on the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore exam results.” (Participant)

“The impact of the Future Leader was significant. 67% of the students on the achievement-based curriculum, which was the Year 7 curriculum, improved their reading ages, 45% of them by six months and 34% of them by twelve months. It was only 17% of students who didn’t have that curriculum that improved at all.” (Residency Head)

Some Participants suggested supporting the development of a stronger leadership team was the biggest impact they had on their school. Interestingly, one participant suggested they used the approaches learned during the programme in developing leadership skills amongst heads and senior leaders and embedded these across all members of staff in their school.

“You have to develop leadership skills in your team as Future Leaders develops leadership skills amongst heads or senior leaders. So, what I’ve implemented in my school is, pretty much putting the same principles. I’ve made sure that every member of staff has an area of leadership they’re working on in the school. Every day they’re seeing themselves as being better than the previous day. I’ve put leadership development at the heart of everything we do because if I want to change the world, I can’t do it on my own. If I develop a team of, you know, 20, 30, 40 staff, then I’ve got more chances to reach my goals. I guess the aim is to make sure that whatever we do internally is also supporting schools externally.” (Participant)

Additionally, developing a vision and values for the school was another significant impact made by some participants. One Residency Head provided an insightful example about how their participant changed the ethos and culture of the school by implementing a clear vision and motto for staff and pupils to follow. It was suggested the framework, guidance and support on the programme enabled the participant to effectively implement this and was very much embedded in the school.

“The Future Leader took over my deputy head role which was behaviour, students, SEN and safeguarding but she focussed on the role of behaviour. She did some amazing work with staff and students around the ethos of the school and together they developed the school motto which is absolutely now embedded and it goes through the school like a stick of rock. Every fibre of

the school, staff and students live and breathe it on a daily basis.” (Residency Head)

## Case study examples

The following case studies provide specific examples of where Participants have had a significant impact in their schools and how this has been achieved.

### **Case study 1 – Increasing the impact of teaching assistants on learning**

#### **Reasons for engagement**

The Residency Head appointed a Future Leader in their school to join the senior leadership team with the expectation that they would impact other members of staff for example, with training and development, have a strong teaching commitment, and help develop a forward-thinking strategic vision for the school.

#### **Activities undertaken**

One of the key areas of work undertaken by the Future Leader was exploring and understanding the effectiveness of the school's teaching assistants.

The school had a large number of teaching assistants, however, through thorough analysis and assessment by the Future Leader it was demonstrated the teaching assistants had little impact on learning. As part of the Future Leader's impact initiative, they researched and found examples of courses and work carried out by the Institute of Education relating to improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants. The Future Leader registered the school with this university to gain access to additional materials and embedded their learning taking a lead on the project during their first year. Responsibilities included observing and monitoring staff, providing feedback, developing teams and creating a clear defined structure for the teaching assistants.

#### **Impact on the Future Leader**

The reassessment of teaching assistants had a great deal of impact on the Future Leader, particularly their learning, enabling them to be more resilient and persevering, for example, initially they had difficulty communicating with staff who had been at the school for a longer period of time. The Future Leader used the training and techniques learnt from the programme to overcome this. On the other hand, as their focus in the first year was on one specific area, the Future Leader recognised and acknowledged a gap in their knowledge development around areas such as budgetary constraints and finance; imperative areas to be an effective senior leader or head.



### **Impact of the Future Leader on the school**

During the process the Future Leader reinforced that all staff should be making a positive impact on the school. Teachers and senior leaders were much clearer on the high expectations of teaching assistants in the school and the Future Leader was able to encourage teaching assistants to understand their roles and responsibilities more clearly, improving the quality of teaching across the school.

One of the key enablers to the impact of the Future Leader was perceived to be their presence, acknowledgement and recognition as an integrated team member. The Residency Head described this as one of the core strengths of the programme; whilst recognising that the nature of the programme meant the presence of the Future Leader may be time-limited.

“The Future Leaders is seen as part of the school, part of the senior leadership, part of the strategic direction, although people do recognise that it’s time-boundaried. As we’ve entered the second year, she is now working and beginning to look for that headship job, so it is very much seen as, this is somebody that will be going at some point this school year.” (Residency Head)

The Residency Head suggested the Future Leader’s training on the programme and visits to outstanding rated schools and academies had also supported them in making an impact in the school. However, the biggest impact they had on the school was being part of the leadership team; they were able to build a high profile and reputation with staff that supported their recommended strategies to improve the quality of the teaching assistants in the school.

## **Case study 2 – Implementation of tracking systems to track student progress**

### **Reasons for engagement**

The Future Leader, a past participant, was motivated to join the programme following an advert they had seen highlighting its core purpose and values. Having previously worked in both affluent areas and areas of deprivation as well as travelling into different schools, they were keen to try and make a difference and change individual's attitudes towards working in challenging schools. The Future Leader's personal motivations for joining the programme were to identify their core purpose and transfer the skills they had built from working across two different local education authorities.

### **Activities undertaken**

The Future Leader outlined that within their residency school, the average reading age of a Year 7 pupil was that of an eight year old. Being responsible for key stage 3, they wanted to change the curriculum by putting extra literacy hours in to the school day. As part of this initiative, before leaving their residency school, they put in a new tracking system to track student progress which became thoroughly embedded within the school.

### **Impact on the Future Leader**

The implementation of the new tracking system had a great deal of impact on the Future Leader in that it enabled them to demonstrate their purpose and motivation for instilling changes and actions within the school. The Future Leader outlined that the programme enabled them to learn about objective data. They also demonstrated the importance of the ethos and values that the Future Leaders programme instils and suggests the tracking system was one way of outlining that every pupil in the school matters and is important. The tracking system allowed the school to identify individuals who were performing well and those performing poorly. By doing so, it allowed leaders and teachers to really focus on those who needed facilitation and ensure the culture about supporting all children was embedded in the school.

“I think the danger in a secondary school particularly, is that it can become a number factory. So, I think that culture of having those conversations e.g. ‘Okay, wow, yes, you got 88%,’ you know, ‘What if you’re a parent of a child who’s in the other 12%, are you still saying that’s okay?’ It’s the whole ethos, the whole culture that it is about every single child.” (Participant)

### **Impact of the Future Leader on the school**

As a result of the implementation of the new tracking system in the school, the Future Leader was able to monitor student progress more accurately and efficiently and really identify those individuals who needed extra support.

“The tracking grids I put in helped us to focus on individual students. So, the grids, what it allowed you to do, was, you could have a conversation with a teacher, and you could pull up a teacher’s class of 25 students, and rather than just say, ‘Right, at the moment, your class is making 40% expected progress’ what it allowed you to do, was to hone in on the individual student. It became much more personalised and sort of developed those student and teacher relationships, because it made the staff almost analyse their own class much more.” (Participant)

The biggest impact on the school was pupil performance. Before the Future Leader left the school, they were able to improve the results in core subjects with the number of A\* to C’s increasing from 12% in the first year to 23% the following year.

## **Case study 3 – Developing leadership styles for headship**

### **Reasons for engagement**

The Future Leader, a current participant, joined the programme and saw it as a natural progression from their previous role. They became aware of the programme through word of mouth and suggested it was highly advocated by previous participants. Their personal ambition was to become a head and having completed the Teach First programme this was their next step to develop their own leadership style and gain the skills and knowledge to be a successful head. The Future Leader also had a desire to work in places where they felt pupils were disadvantaged and lacked fairness and equality in society.

### **Activities undertaken**

The Future Leader outlined that the training on the programme had been key in putting their skills in to practice. Not only had this increased their personal confidence, it had also enabled them to manage teams effectively. The Future Leader also explained that the school they were working in was one of the 10 lowest performing school in the country; however, through the focus on individual leadership for staff and understanding of how to support both teachers and pupils in the school, they were able to turn a failing school around.

The training that has supported the Future Leader in achieving this impact included understanding the challenges faced by staff and recognising the areas of support required to coach and work with them to make improvements.

### **Impact on the Future Leader**

Understanding how to communicate with staff and identify their individual leadership styles was outlined as imperative in order for the Future Leader to help drive improvements in the school. They outlined that the programme aided them in developing staff, increasing their skill set and supporting promotion which in turn had provided better quality teaching for pupils.

The Future Leader learnt from the programme that leaders need to be managed with integrity, be supported through excellent coaching skills, and kept updated on changes in the school, as well as working with them to put new interventions in place. An example of how this was achieved was through arranging meetings and putting time in to prepare action plans for pupils as well as setting personal development plans for teachers.

“Over three years, I’ve been involved in a range of those processes. I would say that coming into a school with very, very low grades, you’re going to have a meeting around, you know, them talking to me about this being in a good position and me explaining and coaching them through the fact that this is very far from where we need it to be. Then working with them to put interventions in place to get it to where we need to be and then celebrating that.” (Participant)

### **Impact of the Future Leader on the school**

As outlined above, the Future Leader, as a result of the training on the programme was able to improve the schools performance from 20% to 60% in one year. As well as this, they outlined the improvement in the school’s Ofsted report having received a ‘good’ overall but ‘outstanding’ for leadership.

Interestingly, as part of their leadership style, the Future Leader made an extra effort by incorporating a strategy in their pupil premium which entailed ‘99 things to do before you’re aged twelve and a half’. The Future Leader suggested they incorporated this to provide pupils with a sense of enjoyment amongst the education requirements. This included activities such as canoeing trips, playing conkers on a Friday, walking on the beach bare foot etc. The overall result of this led to higher performance and engagement from pupils leading to a lot more positive outcomes for the school.

“I do believe that the school is a success story and the children are very impacted here. My leadership is one of the things that’s played a part in that.” (Participant)

The Future Leader suggests the programme has had the biggest impact on the development of leadership values and recognising their individual leadership style which they have implemented within the school. The support from their LDA has also enabled them to recognise their areas of weakness and find ways to manage and develop that in to becoming an effective leader.

*“The programme has had impact in terms of developing my ability to coach people and raising us to seeing that as important, although I’m not always perfect at it. The residential weekend was also key in achieving that as was the coaching, having a coach come in X, Y, Z, was also significant in that.” (Participant)*

## **Case study 4 – Improving grades through impact initiative**

### **Reasons for engagement**

The Future Leader, a current participant, was seeking a programme to support them in their leadership development and aspiration. They were looking for additional support outside of their school to reach headship and felt the Future Leaders programme would be the best programme to achieve this based on their understanding that it aims to develop outstanding leaders for challenging schools. The Future Leader described themselves as being quite self motivated with high expectations; however, they wanted a programme which helped identify areas for self improvement.

### **Activities undertaken**

The Future Leader suggested that the school was considered to be in challenging circumstances as they had a high proportion of pupils who were eligible for free school meals; however, the biggest challenge was pupil performance and low results. The school was in the 50th percentile and faced challenges such as quality of teaching and learning, lack of experienced staff and difficulties with recruitment at senior levels.

The Future Leader joined the school with the ambition to increase results in subjects such as business, art, design technology and history. This was outlined as part of their impact initiative to help change the ethos and culture of the school. Their school has a number of Future Leaders participants so the impact initiatives were key in helping and supporting one another in being dedicated to making a change and committing to it.

### **Impact on the Future Leader**

The Future Leader outlined that their residency year had prepared them for working in a challenging environment, if they had not taken the job in the school where they completed this, they would have not been able to make a significant impact. They suggested Future Leaders showed having the right mindset will create the right impacts.

The Future Leader outlined that working in a school with a high volume of additional Future Leaders kept them motivated, it set high expectations and provided a culture of 'no excuses' across the school. They outlined that they have implemented this way of thinking to support them in increasing the results of non-core subjects. The impact initiative and developing an environment which focuses on the outcome of students resulted in the Future Leader increasing the pupil results for Business Studies from 39% to 84% and Art from 72% to 100%.

### **Impact of the Future Leader on the school**

The biggest impact on the school was encouraging and motivating students in achieving the best of their ability which in turn improved the results for the school. The Future Leader explains their teaching style motivated students to stay on track to achieve results which they can leave school and do well from.

“The high expectations, no excuses kind of culture rubs off on the entire school, so you get that commitment and that climate from everybody. That also rubs off on the students, because then they’re also kind of having that release, and they think that we should have high expectations, no excuses.” (Participant)

The Future Leader suggested having an impact initiative and key focus on the impact that they were looking to make in their school developed an environment that they could achieve whatever they put their mind to, and ensure a good outcome for students. Students also took this mentality and approach on board which in turn inspired them to do well.

### **Additional factors impacting Participants in the school**

As well as the support of the HPSL programme and the resulting skills, knowledge and expertise developed by individuals, the majority of Participants expressed how additional ongoing factors also supported the impacts they were able to make in their school. This included the training and support from their LDA and the positive relationship with their Head or senior leadership team.

“I meet with my LDA once a term; they come down to my school to see me. We spend the day talking about the things that I’ve done, the things I’m finding hard, where I’ve had successes and why that might be. Like I say, it’s essential really. They give you the space to reflect on what you’ve done so it has a big impact.” (Participant)

Networking with others in the profession and working with other schools was also a contributing factor for some to share information, best practice and identify what works well or does not work well.

“When I was on residency, when I was on my training over the summer, I got contacts with people who were having impacts in their schools. I spoke to them and found out which educational programmes they were using to do this sort of teaching, and then use them in my school.” (Participant)

A few Participants also suggested they carried out their own research through wider reading of frameworks, case studies and textbooks on areas such as behaviour and change management. One participant also provided the example of using the fish bone technique to implement change in their school.

“At the start of the year I was overwhelmed with the sheer volume of things I needed to improve in progress and attainment. The fish bone technique helped me identify the key strands, then each strand could be broken into component parts. I then prioritised these strands and drew up an action plan. It is something I did privately to organise my thoughts and then it allowed me to communicate my strategy clearly to others.” (Participant)

## Areas of least impact

Although the programme was perceived positively amongst most, some made suggestions on areas where they felt the HPSL programme had the least impact on their school and could support them better.

Some referred to their personal experiences of the programme suggesting they had a poor relationship with the in-school mentor or LDA due to lack of support and understanding of their skills and knowledge. One participant from a recent cohort in particular outlined they were not provided with a mentor and expressed the programme did very little to address this as highlighted in the following quotation.

“The quality of mentoring, mine wasn’t as brilliant as some others. Just that my school, when I was doing it, the residency school got £12,000 for having me. They don’t do that now, I don’t think, but they weren’t really offering me or giving me the mentoring and guidance that they were supposed to give me. I don’t think the school was held to account enough by Future Leaders. To say, you know, ‘You’re getting £12,000. What are you doing with it?’ So I didn’t get any mentoring. The others would have an in-school mentor. I’ve never had an in-school mentor in any of the schools that I’ve been in. So they didn’t come back and challenge the school.” (Participant)

Limited opportunities to visit schools in the UK and other countries were considered a limitation in the HPSL programme making an impact on their school. The importance of understanding and identifying how other schools operate and sharing best practice with peers and colleagues was considered key in making impacts. Therefore, it was felt by a few that the Future Leaders Trust ought to provide more opportunities within the programme to achieve this.

A minority of Participants mentioned some of the workshops being irrelevant and described them as a poor use of time, in particular, workshops on timetabling. They



also outlined they would have benefitted from more workshops or courses on data and finance to support them reaching headship.

## Sustaining improvement

Participants and Residency Heads were taking various actions to ensure that they were able to build on and sustain improvements. Quite a few demonstrated the idea of continuous improvement; they are always looking for ways to build on improvements made in the school.

“Evaluating the school improvement plan and looking always at working with other schools to look at good practice, and being able to make sure we keep abreast of all current developments. It’s about not standing still, and knowing that there are always things that can be improved.” (Participant)

A number of Participants considered the culture to be imperative for continuous improvement; the mission of the school is aligned with the programme.

“Consistency and building a strong leadership path line that comes behind me. Making sure that the vision, values and culture of the school are built in something tangible, viable and realistic for all stakeholders and not built around myself. That’s how I think I would be doing it.” (Participant)

Many highlighted the importance of working with the right people so they can move the school forward; thereby ensuring the improvements made are sustainable. Working with middle leaders was felt, by a small number of participants, to be the key to sustaining improvement, with one wanting to encourage more of them to join the programme in order to have Participant sat every level within the school.

Several of the HPSL participants and Residency Heads interviewed see the programme as being a part of this continued improvement; with one Residency Head stating that having internal candidates on the programme makes it easier to embed the vision within the school. A few mentioned that continuing to utilise the network and work with other schools to share good practice will aid improvement, while a few keep an eye on the training Future Leaders Trust provides.

“I’m still part of their leading articles that come out, and I always read any tips of things that are being shared, or any blogs that I might think are of interest, and I’ll log in if I think something’s of interest. I’m always keeping abreast of bits of information that come through, through the Future Leaders e-bulletins.” (Participant)

“I follow Future Leaders on Twitter and I think it’s great because they’ve got a whole bank of people that they follow.” (Participant)

Finally, a few participants believed that they would have more success in sustaining improvements if and when they were in more senior roles. One participant believed that the influence they have as an assistant head to sustain improvement is limited, thus this will be more possible as a head in the future.

## 7. Phase 2: Wider views of Residency Heads

### Views on aims of the programme

Overall Residency Heads we interviewed were positive in their views of the HPSL programme with most suggesting it had a substantial impact on individual's ability to become effective leaders and highly advocated the quality of training, advice and support available throughout the programme.

“I don't really see that it's had any detrimental impact really at all. I think it's all been really positive.” (Residency Head)

Interestingly, one Residency Head mentioned they were very positive about the programme when they initially started taking on HPSL participants in 2007; however, their perception has since deteriorated as they do not feel it is as impactful as it used to be suggesting it is now perceived as more of a fast track route to senior leadership.

“When there were a small number of individuals who were very, very highly invested in, you could see the impact directly but now it's almost become just another route to senior leadership for a lot of people.” (Residency Head)

A minority suggested there is a perception of lack of awareness of the programme amongst potential Participants and unless recommended by others, they would not know what it has to offer.

The majority suggested the aim of the programme is to look for talented individuals and support their development in to successful leaders or heads of challenging schools. Some Residency Heads also described the aim of the programme to help support underperforming children in challenging schools ensuring every child received the best possible education available to them.

“It's all about high expectations, every child, every day, every person, really, because, you know, in order to progress you have to have a learning community. That you work together, that we collaborate, and ensure that we distil and bring best practices into the community.” (Residency Head)

### Motivations to join the programme

Some Residency Heads had become involved with the HPSL programme in order to offer residency to existing members of staff. As well as offering training and support to their staff to help their career development, most Residency Heads felt that the

HPSL programme and network would provide individuals with access to experience and learning from other sources which enable them to develop.

“I’ve been able to look at other members of staff and feel, yes, I can see what that path looks like, and there could be other avenues that other people can go down. So as a result of that, last year we put somebody through for the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML)<sup>8</sup>, and we’re doing somebody this year, because there are other programmes out there that can actually help develop, when you see potential.” (Residency Head)

Some had heard about the programme at events or through their network, and became interested in the opportunity. A few had seen it advertised in newspapers and websites, and thought it was a strong offer. They saw the HPSL programme as an opportunity to have high quality senior leaders working in their school during their residency year. Additionally, they liked the ethos of Future Leaders Trust, and wanted to be part of developing the next generation of successful ‘Future Leaders’.

Additionally, many of the interviewed Residency Heads reported their motivation to join the programme was to look for individuals with relevant capabilities to focus on driving improvements in key areas of the school such as leadership and teaching and learning. Some also suggested they were looking for leaders that understand the schools vision and were passionate about supporting young people. A few mentioned they had difficulties recruiting individuals in to senior roles so turned to the programme for support to find skilled and talented individuals with sufficient experience.

One suggested their motivation for joining the programme as a Residency Head was to employ individuals who would support children and show what they could bring to the community to transform the lives of children. Having previously been a participant on the programme, they were aware of the skills and intelligence individuals would bring and wanted to build a network of like-minded professionals in their school. Sharing best practice with others members of the team and providing a sense of direction for specific areas to improve was also a motivating factor to acquire an HPSL participant in the school.

A few Residency Heads mentioned they had also been a participant on the HPSL programme and their personal motivation for joining the programme was to develop strong leadership skills and apply that as a senior leader in the school. Having experienced how beneficial the programme was to them, they wanted to help others

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-middle-leadership-npqml>

to transform challenging schools. One Residency Head provided an example of a previous school they had worked in which had pass rate of 2%. Rather than the senior leadership team being focussed on improving the pass rate and supporting children in to further education, they were mainly focussed on providing a secure and safe harbour. This is when the Residency Head turned to the programme to seek individuals who were focussed on making impacts and improving pupil performance.

“I’d seen what it had done for me; my first headship was a school that had been the worst school in Britain. You have to have people around you who come with a similar mind set, it’s not about where you are, it’s not about the community that you serve, it’s about what you can bring in to that community to transform the lives of children. Once you get that, sort of, commonality of philosophy around you, you can actually then address it, and you can mitigate the affect of those who are apologists for the previous regime, if you like.”  
(Residency Head)

Another Residency Head suggested they expected the participant to help drive change in the school. For some this involved working closely with the senior management team while for others the role was to monitor student progress more accurately.

Additionally, two Residency Heads outlined, to overcome some of the challenges in the school, they were in need of a fresh pair of eyes to identify and understand how to drive improvements in the school. They were looking for individuals who would improve results and change the reputation of the school to one where parents and the community were proud to send their children to.

“I wanted someone to make it, you know, a school that parents want to send their children to, for them to be proud of the school, to be a school of choice among the community, for the community to be more fully involved with the school and for it to be seen as island of hope and expectation, really.”  
(Residency Head)

## **Views of participant impact/effect on the school**

Across all Residency Heads interviewed, there were a range of one to five Participants employed in the school. The most impacts these Participants made during their residency can be summarised into the following key areas:

- Progress status and outcomes for pupils (i.e. improving pupil premium and closing the gap)

- Making a strong contribution to the professional development of middle and senior leadership
- Bringing new ideas to the school to improve teaching and learning.

Almost all Residency Heads reported the HPSL participants had a positive impact on their school. They provided examples such as closing the pupil premium gap, providing a role model to colleagues and demonstrating effective ways of working with students and staff. Importantly, each of the HPSL participants was able to drive change in their school by implementing new ideas and insight.

“They are the person who helped us to close the pupil premium gap, so, working alongside colleagues to identify those children who were significant, important, in terms of addressing those issues, and ensuring that those children were given the best opportunities to succeed.” (Residency Head)

Closing the attainment gap between affluent and poorer pupils was a common challenge outlined by Residency Heads in their school. One Residency Head provided an example of how their participant focussed on ensuring the pupil premium gap remained tight within the school. They led on the introduction of a new key stage 3 curriculum with a strong focus on improving outcomes in English across the academy’s provision. The Residency Head suggested that through the analysis of data, pupil engagement and leadership the participant was able to make a significant impact on the school. For example, school results increased from 59% to 83% and pupils were considerably more engaged. This impact was also recognised by Ofsted inspectors.

“So she looked at pupil engagement and pupil leadership in class, and so on, and made a massive difference on that, in fact she was observed by an Ofsted inspector, who just thought the practice that he’d seen, he’d never seen anything better. The children actually actively engaged, and explained to the teachers what worked, what didn’t work in terms of the way in which they were learning, and these were children in year six. So it’s a massive, massive impact.” (Residency Head)

Many Residency Heads believed staff development to be an area that improved as a result of the participant, for example one Residency Head spoke of the way they felt their participant had been able to make a strong contribution to the professional development of staff. Through the training, modules, skills and knowledge gained on the programme, they were able to rapidly increase the senior team which in turn helped develop other leaders by benefitting from one another’s ideas, resources and skills. The Residency Head was exceptionally pleased with the development of the participant and how rapidly they had taken up senior responsibility.

“Because they’ve been faster at developing into effective senior leaders, the impact on their day-to-day jobs has been significant as well. They’ve hit the ground running and been able to take up senior responsibility in quite a seamless way, so very rapidly they’re operating at a high level. Any area of responsibility they’ve been dealing with has had a huge benefit from that.  
(Residency Head)

Other Residency Heads mentioned the biggest impact their participant had on the school was their ability to bring new and innovative ideas forward which supported the senior leadership team as well as improving the quality of teaching and learning. The process of this for some included visiting other schools to understand and identify different methods towards teaching, working with and alongside peers and colleagues to share best practice and regularly attending HPSL programme meetings to gain knowledge and generate new ideas.

## **Development in Participants**

The Residency Heads mentioned a number of ways in which they supported their participant (s) in making impacts in the school. These included, acting as a mentor and arranging regular meetings to reflect on their practice or identify any development needs. Some also had provided the opportunity for their participant to shadow them and heads in other schools.

“I always meet with all of the Future Leaders, irrespective of whether I’m a mentor or not. We chat, and we talk through things and give them different perspectives, and give them things to think about. So all of that is done, and I think that’s an important aspect of my role.” (Residency Head)

As well as this, Residency Heads also confirmed that the HPSL participants also received additional support from internal and external training, involvement with other schools and advice and guidance from their LDA. The Residency Heads felt that networking with like-minded individuals during their residency also contributed the impact and success of the participant in the school.

As an outcome of the support throughout the programme, almost all Residency Heads said that they saw significant development in their Participants during their time at the school. Some had gained a promotion into an Assistant Head position from their residency.

“I’ve seen a really strong development. The first Future Leader was appointed as Assistant Principal, and I’ve now promoted her to Vice Principal. She’s currently applying for headships. The one who’s been in post for a year, I’ve had the conversation even this week, about taking on additional responsibility.

If there are some changes, then she will go from Assistant to Vice Principal.”  
(Residency Head)

Others had improved in areas such as their approach to communication with colleagues and their level of confidence in presenting and conveying new ideas.

“It’s given that Future Leader tremendous confidence. First of all, she wasn’t confident with data. Secondly, with regard to having permission to go and do things, she’s gained a huge amount of confidence there. She’s led on something and carried the staff with her, and it’s been successful, so therefore it’s just helped to establish her as a top-quality leader, that people do, now, after a year, respect and follow. I think it’s been terrific for the Future Leader.”  
(Residency Head)

## **Residency Heads’ experience**

In general, Residency Heads outlined that their expectations of the HPSL programme had been met and for some, their expectations had been exceeded. For example, one felt their participant was a lot more skilled and knowledgeable in the area of teaching and learning compared to previous participants (who they felt were not as good quality participants) and hoped to support them in to a promotion. Another thought their participant helped the school to get a wider perspective of how to develop the school culture and foresees them as being a part of the schools continued improvement.

Another Residency Head was generally positive in their experience of taking on four participants. They reported their expectations had been met and their school had benefited from the Future Leaders Trust’s involvement as hoped. However, they mentioned that one participant, who had started at the school for their residency year, had limited experience and was not as effective as others previously recruited. The participant faced a number of issues such as struggling with leadership and having little support from their LDA. The Residency Head noted that there was very little support from the Future Leaders Trust and were generally quite let down by the process.

“My last external resident actually wasn’t terribly effective and there were issues. We were very much left to get on with it really, and I felt that there should have been some additional support for her, in fact, because she was struggling with leadership. None was forthcoming and I felt that she was let down by that process really, and I felt as a school, quite let down by it.”  
(Residency Head)



## 8. Phase 2: Views on other forms of support

In their interviews the HPSL participants outlined different forms of support they had received in addition to that received from the HPSL programme and expressed a variety of views regarding its usefulness. The additional forms of support can be summarised as follows:

- Additional training
- Support from people outside of the programme
- Previous experience
- Personal development

It should be noted that Future Leaders Trust tries to encourage its participants to become self-directed learners. The Trust is also a licensee of NPQH, and when the contract for the High Potential Senior Leaders programme was initially let, it was anticipated that all Participants would need to go on to complete NPQH, as this was then a mandatory condition of employment as a head.

Many of the HPSL participants told us that they attended and became involved in additional internal and external training that was unrelated to the HPSL programme; they felt this had facilitated and helped with their development.

Some of the HPSL participants mentioned taking part in external Ofsted training which involved conducting school inspections. This enabled them to observe and understand the requirements and standards required by Ofsted in school practices. Having such valuable knowledge and experience, led the HPSL participants to experience a boost in confidence.

“We got loads of inspectors in the school and I got the opportunity to work alongside two inspectors. That was a fantastic experience; it increased my confidence and understanding about what I was looking for when I was carrying out my job. When I’d been in charge of teaching and learning, I was walking around doing lesson observations, looking at books with them and it has been validated since then”. (Participant)

Other external courses mentioned by the HPSL participants included the NPQH. The majority of Participants we spoke with had completed the NPQH course either since completing or prior to joining the HPSL programme, whilst a few chose to take part in the course during the programme. Many of them expressed the view that the NPQH on its own did not give them the breadth of knowledge and experience they believed they needed, had they applied for headship in a challenging school immediately

after. Thus, having completed the NPQH as well as the HPSL programme had enabled them to develop more comprehensively and feel more prepared. One participant mentioned that the material taught in the NPQH development programme which they had undertaken was already taught in the foundations training that formed part of the HPSL programme.

A few Participants attended external training specific to Assistant and Deputy Heads within their local authority, which was described as useful. Additionally one participant joined in the 'Achieve Together' programme<sup>9</sup>, which was perceived as helpful foundation knowledge whilst working towards leadership.

Internal training courses were generally offered by the schools in which the interviewed participants were employed. Some participants were part of and involved in setting up a teaching school alliance that enabled them to attend training in a wider network of schools as well as deliver training courses and programmes. Training courses typically related to leadership. Some examples include: aspiring middle leadership training, introduction to leadership course, leading on effective teaching and learning, SEN training, and an in-house leadership course called 'Rising with the Tide'. Other training was generally viewed as a positive but, again, not as comprehensive as training delivered on the HPSL programme.

Some Participants received support from previous and current school principals, a small minority of whom were ex-participants of the HPSL programme. They were able to contact and arrange meetings when they required advice or support. They also mentioned that they were able to shadow the principals and learn a lot from observing their practice.

"My headteacher, although he's not a Future Leader himself, he's very Future Leaders like. He's using the Future Leaders mission as well, and he's a fantastic leader so he's been an absolute inspiration to learn from and have as support". (Participant)

Others mentioned receiving support from friends and networks they had created previously, who were particularly considered useful to share ideas and knowledge with, around a variety of topics. A few Participants mentioned receiving support from fellow staff members and teachers in their schools who were very useful when particular tasks required team work. Others mentioned support from school mentors who were not linked to the HPSL programme. They stated that such additional mentors (not necessarily from the HPSL programme) were also very supportive and

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.achievetogether.org/>

had a positive influence in terms of continual encouragement, especially during challenging situations.

“I think my school mentor has been very supportive, she’s not a Future Leader, and wasn’t necessarily a part of it. She offered coaching and mentoring, support and was there when in need. So really doing that role really well, and working at it really well as well, because we were both very busy and both very challenging, but she made sure she found the time to say, ‘Actually, sometimes we need the coaching session. We need to actually find out what’s going-, how you feel about something.’ That was really good’ ”.  
(Participant)

A minority of participants reported that reflections on their previous experience and learning had proved useful in their current practice. Some attended various leadership courses prior to the programme that proved beneficial in areas such as decision making, managing challenging scenarios, working with senior members of the team and generally working effectively in a team environment. Whilst others mentioned that their previous career experience aided them in their practice, especially managing staff members effectively and developing emotional intelligence to do so.

“I suppose previous experience. I had varied experience of middle leadership. Also, outside of education too. Some things like running my own football club that requires an awful lot of difficult conversation. On a weekly basis. Yes, so that all became very useful. That kind of emotionally taught me”. (Participant)

Lastly, a smaller minority of Participants mentioned that self-development through wider reading and research around the different aspects of leadership also supported their practice. They were able to apply theory to practice and implement impactful changes in the school. For example, one participant specifically mentioned using the fishbone technique to help organise key priorities for the school and aid in developing a manageable action plan. This was something that the participant learnt about independently through personal reading to organise thoughts and communicate recommended strategies to other members of the team clearly.

“At the start of the year I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of things I needed to improve progress and attain. The fish bone technique helped me identify the key strands, and then each strand could be broken into small component parts. I then prioritised these strands and drew up an action plan. It is something I did privately to organise my thoughts and then it allowed me to communicate my strategy clearly to others”. (Participant)

## 9. Phase 2: Investment in the programme

### Participants

Overall, almost all Participants suggested their biggest investment in the programme was time and personal efforts. The majority referred to time in that they had to put in a number of additional hours outside their working day and committed to working over weekends or during summer holidays to get the best out of the programme. Some suggested they invested time in giving back to the network such as taking part in surveys, acting as a peer mentor and speaking at events. The biggest time commitment for the majority was the foundations training during their first year on the programme.

“Giving up two weeks of your summer holidays for someone who normally travels at least four, five weeks of them wasn’t something that I took lightly but very pleased I did it. I learnt a lot from those two weeks. Yes, just very, very worthwhile and the effort and time investment is definitely paying off”.

(Participant)

In addition to this, some suggested the amount of time they invested in the programme resulted in them seeing their family and friends less. Others had to commute from home to be able to work in a challenging school and in some cases, moved to another region.

Some Participants spoke about their emotional investment in the programme which was to support and improve the education for children in challenging schools. One participant in particular expressed the time they invested in the programme was to help drive student’s achievements.

“I wouldn’t quantify it because I have to do it. I’ve enjoyed doing it. It’s one of those ones where I’ll give up my time to do it. I’ll stay up until one o’clock in the evening all the time, just to make sure that the impact’s being done. It’s not because I haven’t got work tomorrow, it’s because I believe in the course, and I know that me working hard will ensure that the school does end up changing, and ultimately, the students achieve”. (Participant)

One participant outlined that the time required to invest in the programme was difficult for them to balance with their personal commitments therefore made the difficult decision to take a step back.

“Well, I’ve probably, kind of, divested because I think I did invest and then realise that that has a huge cost to my family and actually have, sort of, stepped back a little bit. I will do my payback and I will support others and I

will do my job but I'm not going to meet their criteria within four years because the price is too high". (Participant)

However, almost all Participants interviewed agree that the investment they made in the programme was extremely worthwhile. The key elements of the programme for these individuals was summarised as:

- Recognition of having the ability to make an impact in their school
- Demonstrating they are able to make a difference in pupils lives
- Gaining a wealth of experience and knowledge through the training and courses
- Increasing their confidence to achieve senior roles or headship

Some suggested the programme was worthwhile to them as they were able to show they could make a positive impact in their school and make a difference in pupil's lives. This included improving grades, reducing the attainment gap and providing teachers with the quality of training and support required as well as ensuring pupils had all the resources for effective learning.

"I think I developed a belief that there was a genuine commitment from Future Leaders to improving life chances for children. It wasn't just, you know, a five-minute initiative. It was run by a group of people who had a profound commitment to addressing social injustice through improved education".  
(Participant)

The quality of training, workshops, various courses and modules throughout the programme have been worthwhile for most. Participants outlined that they have also provided excellent value for money due to the various skills and knowledge they have gained throughout the programme. The support from the LDA and mentor was also deemed extremely valuable. In addition to this, the majority reported that the programme had a significant impact on improving their level of confidence. Most have been able to develop key skills which they have put into practice to make impacts in schools.

"I mean, I've seen myself grow, I've seen the impact of what I've, sort of, done to schools, I feel much more confident as a leader, I feel a much better leader because of it. I know when I get to be a head teacher, I'll be a much better head teacher because of it, and I've learned a lot about myself along the way as well". (Participant)

Being part of a wider network and working alongside like-minded professionals was an extremely beneficial investment for some as it allowed them to share best practice and support each other in making an impact in their school more efficiently.

“I think the size of the programme now means there’s lots of peer to peer support from one school to another. I think that’s been a significant advantage, to being part of the network, as there’s now lots of other head teachers, deputy head teachers, again, all likeminded, all been through the same programme, all know each other and because, with the demise of local authorities, it’s hard, otherwise, to find that kind of support, I think, from other schools”. (Participant)

When comparing their experience of the programme to other leadership programmes, the majority were extremely positive about the HPSL programme. Most suggested the HPSL programme does not compare to others and summarised the training, access to practical support and LDA advice and guidance as invaluable.

“It’s been value for money because I would not have had these opportunities without the Future Leaders programme. Yes, I would not have been able to access them via my [local authority], or via my school, you know, I just wouldn’t have had those opportunities. You know, it’s enabled me to learn as much as I have, or to develop the skills as much as I have. For me, you know, it’s been priceless”. (Participant)

Overall, despite time being a significant investment by participants, almost all suggested the programme had been worthwhile and good value for money. They rated it highly compared to other programmes such as NPQH and leadership courses they had attended, mainly due to the wider support network. In summary, all would highly recommend the programme to others and are thankful to have taken the opportunity to be part of a network that focuses on improving schools in challenging circumstances.

## **Payback**

The HPSL participants interviewed were generally very supportive of the payback concept through which participants in the HPSL programme commit to paying back 30 days of their own time to the network, e.g. supporting new participants, in exchange for the high quality subsidised training and development they receive as part of the programme. Several Participants noted they were happy to be involved and felt that it was a good way to keep the programme running. Furthermore, the idea that it is important to pass what they had learned on to others was emphasized by some. A few noted the importance of developing the network and that it provides the opportunity to share their successes and good practice. A further few

Participants said it increased their confidence and believe it is valuable for their personal development.

“I agree to it, at first I thought it was a lot, 30 days, but actually it isn’t a lot, is it? When you think about how much this is worth. It also develops you, that payback, the options that they give you to be a mentor, to be a facilitator, that develops you. It works both ways, it helps them, but it also helps you.”  
(Participant)

“It’s our job to promote the network to help to evolve it because it’s not going to evolve without us. We can’t just take it and bury our heads in the sand at our own schools that we’re working in. Part of the mission is there are no islands and we share practice beyond our school boundaries.” (Participant)

A few Participants did note, however, that payback can feel quite onerous and time management can make it difficult.

“There is a lot of expectation to payback but I do feel that it’s quite hard to do due to the intensity of the role that you’re doing.” (Participant)

A small number of Participants believed that the hours allotted to the various aspects of payback were not quite right, with some being disproportionately high or low.

“I think some of the payback is superficial, and low impact, and also excessive hours. So I think they give away too many hours for the size of the task, just to try and get people to pay back, and I actually think that’s wrong.” (Participant)

It was felt by several Participants that there are not enough opportunities to give back and a small number thought that a wider range of activities should be included as payback. One participant admitted they are very much reliant on Future Leaders Trust telling them how they can payback, rather than being proactively engaged to find ways of doing it and several stated it was less accessible outside of London as many of the events are held in the capital. However, one participant had overcome this barrier, noting that there is some flexibility as for some payback opportunities they allow them to dial in.

One participant noted that the financial commitment to payback is quite daunting, so on a practical level they have found it quite difficult to find enough opportunities to mean they are keeping pace with the payback they need to do. They find it concerning that there might be a financial impact if they cannot do enough payback.

Most Participants had done some payback already, with a few having completed their payback. The amount they had paid back was, to some extent, related to their length of time on the programme. A small number pointed out that it was difficult to fit

in payback activities early on in their career; they hope to be able to contribute more in subsequent years. One participant stated they have found it easier to complete payback since becoming a head; they now have more capacity to support other participants. A wide variety of payback activities were reported, including:

- Delivering training
- Hosting school events and visits for colleagues
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Writing articles and blogs
- Being a peer mentor or an actor in the role play sessions at foundations training
- Trialled assessment centres
- Speaking at conferences
- Promoting 'Future Leaders' at events
- Payback activities on the Learning Lounge

## Residency Heads

The biggest investment for Residency Heads on the programme was time and acting as a role model for participants. All suggested this was worthwhile and highly advocate the programme.

Despite a minority of Residency Heads having difficulties with some participants, the majority suggested the programme has been value for money, particularly due to the exceptional impacts the HPSL participants have made in the school.

“Yes, I think it has been value for money. I think because it was a vacancy at assistant headship role, financially it was something that the school was committed to anyway. So that hasn't been a burden or a stretch on us, as a school. I do feel that it's been more than value for money, and a very worthwhile programme because, just of the quality of person that we got.”  
(Residency Head)

One Residency Head mentioned making a personal investment in the programme as a result of employing a participant. They suggested working with the participant and developing ideas allowed them to really reflect on their own leadership style.



“I think, so we had to make some financial investment, as a school, in it. I think I’ve made quite a personal investment in terms of time and wanting to work alongside [a participant] as his mentor about things, you know, so we can develop ideas together. It’s got me to reflect on leadership as I’ve said, so I think that’s been a really positive thing.” (Residency Head)

Overall, the majority of Residency Heads were extremely positive about their experience on the programme and recognised the quality and specialist skills the HPSL participants were able to bring to their school. As a result of their experience, some Residency Heads outlined they strongly recommend the programme to other heads and would continue to recruit Participants in their school going forward.

## 10. Key findings and conclusions

The following chapter presents key findings and conclusions from the research. When interpreting the findings from the interviews, it is important to note that they are based on the qualitative analysis conducted, and not based on quantitative statistical evidence. Therefore the findings are based on the experiences of those interviewed and not representative of all participants. However, these findings do provide a greater insight into the experiences of the participants, the impacts that they had and the extent to which the different programme elements were effective.

### Satisfaction with programme content and delivery

Generally participants and residency heads were satisfied that the overall content and delivery of the HPSL programme was well structured and of a high quality. Moreover, participants were highly positive about the programme as a whole and the impact they believed it had on them and the schools they have worked in during and following their participation in the programme.

As a result of a rigorous application process and undertaking the foundations phase, training participants believed that the programme had been successful not only in identifying and accepting appropriate candidates, but also in instilling and reinforcing the programme values and ethos to them from the start.

The different phases of the programme were generally seen to offer a good level of differentiation of activities and progression for participants.

**Foundations:** Foundations training was frequently cited as the most beneficial element of the programme which participants believe provided them with the knowledge and skills they needed for their residency year. The combination and high level of challenge involved in the activities that were undertaken and the high quality of the speakers was seen to have been transformative for participants, both in terms of what was learnt, and what they were capable of.

**Residency:** The residency year was perceived as important so that the participant could further develop and apply the skills and leadership knowledge they had gained through the foundations phase. In addition, for some it was crucial in terms of giving them their first experience of a senior leadership role.

Circumstantial barriers did, to some extent, impact on participant's overall view on their residency year, in particular the location of the residency (for example, staying in their current school or going to a different school for residency), the level of engagement and input from the Residency Head / Deputy or Leadership

Development Adviser (LDA), and the actual activities they were able to undertake during this year.

The study tour was seen to be particularly effective and beneficial (whether the participant had attended an earlier tour in the US or a more recent tour in the UK) as it provided more practical exposure to different types of schools and approaches.

**Years 2 and 3:** Following the residency year participants who had progressed into Years 2 and 3 of the HPSL programme reported an overall drop-off both in terms of programme intensity and contact with Future Leaders Trust. The majority of contact was through LDAs and coaches during this phase. Whilst for most participants it was apparent that this was appropriate as they felt more confident to operate with less support at the stage, some believed the drop-off was a little too steep, and that additional contact or activities would have been beneficial. Some who changed schools following their residency year did report more difficulties following this, especially if their current school was not familiar with the HPSL programme and what they were trying to achieve.

Continued engagement with networks was also seen as very important and those who had been able to do this believed this was very valuable. As such, cohort weekends were seen as a useful activity for increasing levels of engagement and enthusiasm.

## **Elements of the programme believed to have most increased learning**

Foundations and the residency year were most frequently cited as the elements of the programme which had the most impact on participants' learning and skills development. During the foundations stage the most beneficial elements identified by participants were:

**Networking** – the range and number of participants being brought together during foundations was seen as very positive and many participants used this opportunity to develop their networks of colleagues. Subsequently it was found such networks were highly useful for providing support during the programme, advice on specific issues within schools, and sharing good practice. Some participants also noted that networking had helped them become more aware of emerging job opportunities which had supported them in progressing to headship.



**Range of speakers and content** – the quality of speakers during the foundations stage was frequently reported as a beneficial element that greatly increased learning and dedication to aims of the programme. In particular the speakers were said to be very knowledgeable and motivational, and participants valued them most when they were perceived as ‘credible’, having up to date knowledge and applied experience of challenging schools. Many participants noted that the speakers had motivated them to make changes in their schools.



Following foundations, the residency year was seen as crucial in supporting learning and development, as it provided participants with the opportunity to practically apply the theory and skills they learned in foundations in a challenging school context at a senior level. The continued support from the LDAs and mentors was also seen as important at this stage, as it complemented the practical development by providing the participant with the opportunity to reflect and provided another source for support where needed.

The following diagram shows the key inputs from the programme and impacts for participants from the residency year.



Other specific training that was frequently mentioned as particularly beneficial by participants included seminars on how to handle challenging scenarios and different leadership styles, and training on more managerial aspects of Headship such as the function of human resources and finance.

## Impact on participants

A wide range of personal, learning, and career impacts were noted by participants as a result of their participation in the programme.

**Securing headship:** More than half of the past participants who were interviewed had now entered headship, and most attributed their success to the programme. In particular, the HPSL programme was seen to have significantly shortened the time in which participants had progressed or expected to progress to headship. The timescales of promotion and expected timescales varied, but most thought participation in the HPSL programme had reduced this by around 3-5 years.

The skills developed and subsequently applied on the programme and the opportunities it created for networking were cited as key factors in supporting their progression.

**Skills and confidence:** Most participants we interviewed noted that taking part in the programme had improved their confidence in their skills and leadership abilities. The opportunity the residency year created to put the theory and skills learnt into practice is significant in building this confidence. Participants were able to better evidence their skills as a result and see their impact, which increased their confidence. This was particularly true of areas where they had less experience initially such as finance, human resources, and the use of data at different levels of interest.

For some who had progressed into headship, the increased confidence was seen as key in supporting this, as they felt it underlined their credibility. This was particularly felt by younger participants we interviewed.

**Attitudes to headship:** Whilst some participants thought they had a good understanding of headship before the programme, which did not change, many participants we spoke with believed they knew more about the role of a head as a result of taking part in the programme, and as such that they had previously underestimated the knowledge and skills required. In particular, some believed they better understand the importance of more personal skills in the role such as empathy, understanding, self-awareness and patience as a result of taking part.

**Knowledge of leadership styles:** Participants frequently cited the training they had received on different leadership styles and approaches as important in their time on the HPSL programme. As a result of this training they believed they had an increased awareness of the different styles, but also when and how these may be applicable in their schools. Some participants did note that more discussion of the practical applications of these skills during the foundations stage, and how these may be adapted to different contexts, may have been beneficial.

In some cases a few participants did have concerns and experiences of barriers to headship, these mostly related to demographic and time-related factors, including:

- **Age:** younger participants were concerned that they would be perceived to lack credibility or experience; however, they believed that skills that they learnt on the programme about emotional intelligence and maturity, as well as better communication of their skills in an interview context would address this to some extent.
- **Gender/Family commitments:** those with young children or wanting families, in particular women, believed that taking time out of work or requiring better work/life balance was a barrier to headship. The 'Women in Headship' programme was seen help remove some of these barriers.
- **Ethnicity:** individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds felt some areas of the country were not options for them to achieve Headship in, and as such they would not have as many opportunities to apply for roles as others. For most they did not see this as a barrier that could be easily addressed, which was disheartening for the participants.

## Impact on school performance

A wide range of school and pupil related impacts were reported by participants and Residency Heads as a result of the programme. These impacts were frequently as a result of the participant's impact initiative, but wider and sustained impacts as a result of other actions and ongoing work during subsequent time in senior roles, including headship, were also noted.

Impact initiative targets were mostly related to: increasing attainment and closing the attainment gap; improving teaching and learning; and improving literacy. These targets were often set as a result of a review of the schools improvement plan, or at the recommendation of the head so that they may be consistent and in line with the school's wider aims and objectives.

In most cases participants had been able to meet their targets and of the impact initiatives analysed nearly two thirds of participants had met or exceeded at least one of their targets (amongst the third of participants who had not met any of their targets, they were often close to achieving them). The impact initiatives proved particularly likely to be successful when they were related to implementing and embedding specific policies and systems and when linked to the improvement of teachers.

Participants and Residency Heads interviewed mostly felt that as a result of taking part in the programme and the theory and skills they had developed, they now had the ability to make improvements in schools and had evidence of times when they had:

- Improved teaching and learning at the school through the introduction of specific initiatives and coaching and developing staff.
- Improved the culture of the school by contributing to wider activities such as business planning, staff development, and ethos development.
- Helped reduce the attainment gap as a result of the improvement in teaching and learning, which in some cases had dramatically improved pupil's achievement rates.

Beyond the skills they had learned during the foundations phase, the factors that participants and Residency Heads felt had supported the achievement of these impacts included ensuring that they had regular support from the LDA and their mentor, as this can help to ensure the participant receives regular advice and reflects on their practice. In addition, networking with other participants and new colleagues was also seen as important as it can ensure spread of best practice and source of support. Finally, some participants noted that they had engaged in wider learning and development building on the programme by reading relevant research and best practice literature, as well as taking part in further development activities.

Conversely, poor relationships with their in-school mentor or LDA or a lack of buy in from wider staff or the head were noted as key factors that had meant some initiatives had not had their intended impact, as the participant had felt unsupported and did not know where to receive additional support.

Whilst many of the most notable impacts reported were as a result of the participant's Impact Initiative, interestingly in some cases participants reported that they felt other actions had more impact. This was sometimes noted as due to the fact that if they had changed schools for their residency they were required to decide on an Impact Initiative before they knew the school needs and processes in detail. Those who had also progressed into more senior roles and headship also noted that they had now had more opportunities to have an impact.

## **Views on investment**

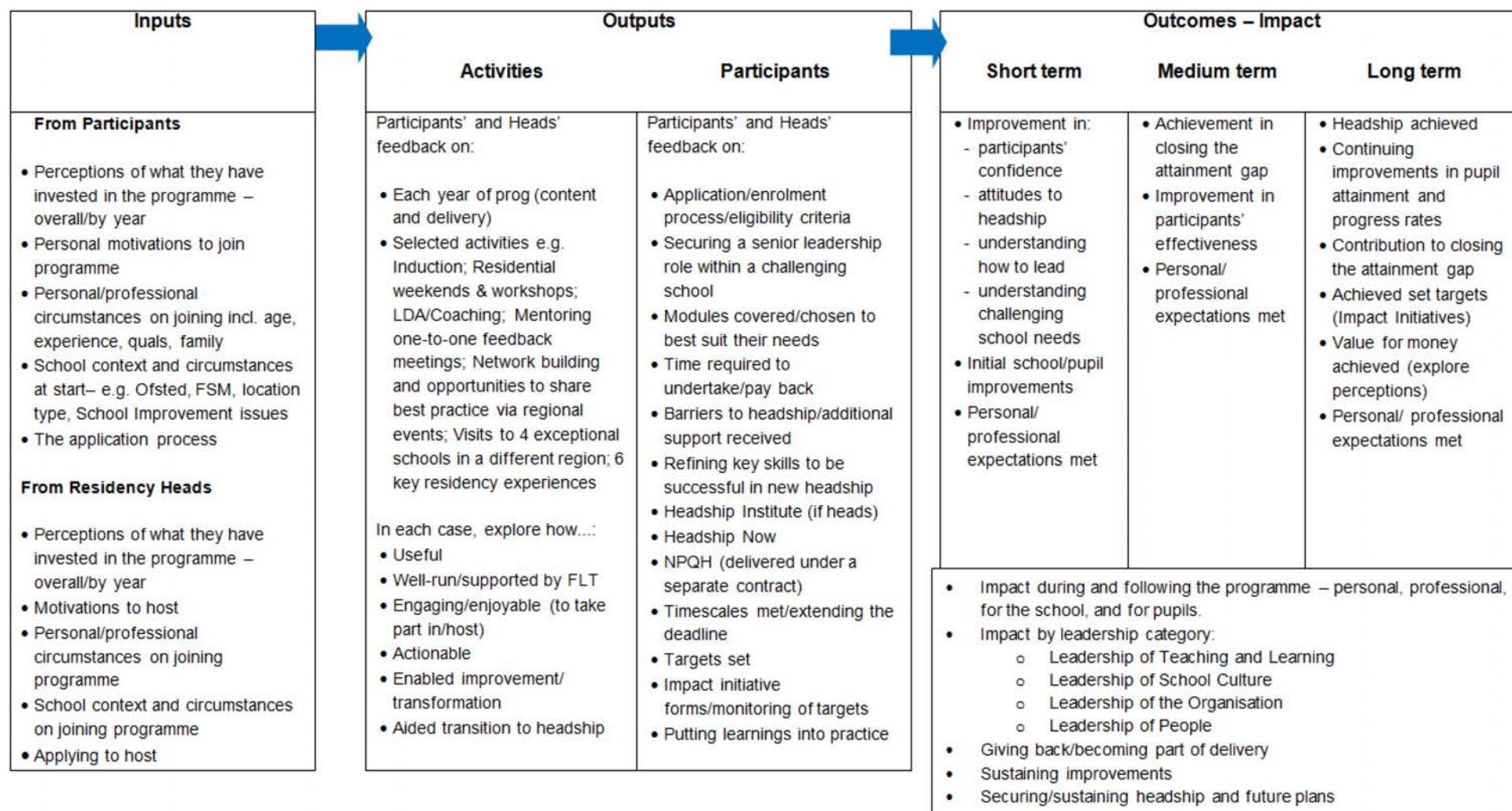
Participants saw the investment into the programme as considerable, both in terms of time and their own personal efforts. This was particularly evident during the foundations and residency phases. Residency Heads also reported having made considerable investments of time, money, and staff resource on the HPSL programme.

Nearly all participants and Residency Heads felt this investment had been worthwhile and were pleased with the value they had received from the HPSL programme, as they believed it enabled them to make a real and tangible impact in their school, and demonstrated they are able to make a difference in their pupil's lives. For participants it also enabled them to gain applied experience and knowledge through the training and residency, and increased their confidence and likelihood to achieve senior roles and in many cases headship.

For Residency Heads another key benefit was enabling them to increase capacity within their senior leadership team, and in some cases also to help wider senior leadership development through the sharing of the 'Future Leader' values.



# Appendix 1: Evaluation framework



## Appendix 2: Phase 2 topic guide

**Client background:** *National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is an executive agency of the Department for Education. It was formed from the merger, on 1 April 2013, of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the Teaching Agency (formerly TDA). It has two key aims: improving the quality of the education workforce and helping schools to help each other to improve.*

*This topic guide will be used flexibly to ensure respondents are asked questions of relevance to them and their role and ensure interviewers are able to pursue emerging lines of enquiry. Unless specified, the topic is relevant to ALL. 'Participants' includes exited/on a break unless specified. Amend wording as appropriate to type of respondent and their programme status. You do not need to follow it in order but it may help the flow to do so.*

### Introduction

**Overview of the research:** National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) has commissioned BMG Research to undertake an evaluation of the HPSL programme, by exploring participant views, experiences and outcomes of the programme.

- We are currently conducting informal interviews with current participants, past participants, and residency heads involved in the programme. The conversation will take about 45mins (depending on your answers) and will cover topics such as your reasons for getting involved, (*if a participant: your learning outcomes*), and the impact of programme activities on you and your school. This depth-interview will feed into a wider research programme which will include focus groups and analysis of impact initiative forms and management information.
- **If necessary:** The focus of this research is to assess the effectiveness and impact of the current programme on both the leaders and the schools they are working in. Its purpose is to ensure that the programme is delivering its intended aims and objectives, and delivering value for money. The evaluation will also identify any examples of best practice in leadership development, enabling these to be shared across the school system.
- **Confidentiality:** All information you provide will be treated confidentially. Your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence as observed by standards determined by the Market Research Society.

There are no right or wrong answers: it's just your views or opinions that count.

Views stated are made anonymous in the report and the more open and honest you can be the better.

Quotes from the discussions may be used in the report as a way of bringing the findings to life. However these would not identify any individual. This is in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

- **Recording:** We would like to audio-record the discussion for the purposes of accurately capturing all the information you share with us. The audio will be used for analysis purposes only and will not be shared with anyone outside of BMG research. Can I double check that this is still ok with you? (Record in depth diary) / or 'You mentioned that you would prefer not to be recorded, is that correct?' (Take detailed notes)
- Do you have any questions about the research before we start?

*If permission granted, switch recorder on. Confirm to respondent that the recorder is now on.*

## For interviewer reference

*When exploring impacts refer to the following elements of the Future Leaders programme to identify which have been the most important/have had the most benefits in enabling development and achievement:*

### Year 1

- Application process
- Foundations training (induction day, weekends 1 & 2, 2-week residential)
- Residency
  - a) Coaching - Leadership Development Advisers (LDAs)/executive coaching/coaching groups
  - b) Mentoring
  - c) US or UK Study Tour (Note: US for cohorts 2012 and prior. UK for 2013-14).
  - d) The Future Leaders Interactive Portal<sup>10</sup>

### Years 2-3

- Modules and their support with technical aspects of headship e.g. finance, HR Management, governance

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<sup>10</sup> Marketplace, Learning Lounge, 360 tool, Development tracking forms, Impact initiative forms

- Regional Events
- Coaching (LDA/Peer Network)
- Cohort weekends

## Headship Now!

- Practical career support
- Group sessions and personalised support e.g. coaching, application and interview support
- Residential weekend
- Additional support for women in overcoming barriers to headship

## Years 4 & 5

- Peer support
- The Headship Institute
  - a) First 100 days support in managing finances/media
  - b) Peer-led school visits
  - c) Media training
  - d) Ofsted training
  - e) Heads Development Centre in year 2
  - f) Annual Headship Institute Symposium

## Depth Interview

### ALL: Warm up and personal context

- Briefly check respondent's details collected at recruitment stage by referring to the depth diary entry including:
  - whether a participant or residency school head
  - current job title
  - year started (cohort)
  - programme status (ongoing/completed/on break/exited).

### ALL: School context

- ALL PARTICIPANTS: Are you working in the same school that you did your residency year in, or another school? If another, can you tell me how many schools you have worked in since joining the programme?

- ALL: In what ways is your current school considered to be in challenging circumstances, if any?

*Explore FSM/ Deprivation/Pupil attainment/attainment gap/geographical isolation/ Ofsted/other as raised by respondent.*

*If the school is not in challenging circumstances explore how the respondent is currently working outside a challenging school context then ask them to tell you about the school or schools they were at the longest while they were active on the programme, for context later in the interview when asking about impact made.*

### **EXITED/ON BREAK: Motivations behind current status**

- Can I ask how far you got into the programme before you began your break from the programme/exited the programme?
- Could you tell me a little bit about your reasons for taking a break/exiting the programme?  
*Explore in detail. Were there any other reasons?*
- Could anything have been put in place to enable or encourage you to stay within the programme/not to take the break/not to exit?
- Did you feel that the process of taking a break/exiting the programme has been/was well-managed? In what ways?

COVER ALL OTHER TOPICS IN THE GUIDE AS RELEVANT, BEARING IN MIND THE POINT AT WHICH RESPONDENT BEGAN THEIR BREAK OR EXITED.

### **ALL: Front of mind views**

- (Before we get into the detail of the impact the programme has had on you) How would you describe or summarise aims of the Future Leaders programme? (if necessary: What do you see as its purpose)?
- Again, before we move into this topic in more depth later, what is your general view of the Future Leaders Programme? And your view on its impact and effectiveness?
- Has your personal experience of the programme been mostly positive or negative? Why?

## **ALL: Motivations to join the programme and expectations**

- Going back to (*insert appropriate year*), what made you interested in getting involved in the Future Leaders programme (as a participant/as a residency head)? *Explore UNPROMPTED.*
- Probe: Anything else?

*After capturing the front of mind response, probe to identify any of the following motivations:*

- A. Learning/skills-related motivations e.g. to learn/develop skills in x?
  - B. Personal motivations e.g. career-related?
  - C. Motivations relating to that school/ those pupils/that locality?
  - D. Social motivations (e.g. supporting the disadvantaged//closing the attainment gap etc)?
  - E. External influences e.g. materials, media campaigns, organisations, people, events etc?
- What were your personal learning objectives when you joined the Future Leaders programme? What did you hope to learn from it? *Interviewer to note all for later prompting.*
  - What impacts did you expect the programme to have...?
    - On you?
    - On your pupils?
    - On your school overall?

*Explore their professional and personal circumstances at the time of getting involved:*

- ALL: Leadership level (middle leader/senior leader/head/other)
  - ALL: Leadership qualifications/other programmes undertaken
  - PARTICIPANTS: Whether already working in a challenging school or not
  - PARTICIPANTS: Age
  - PARTICIPANTS: Perception of readiness for headship at that time e.g. within 18 months, 3 years, five years, over five years, or not at all?
- PARTICIPANTS: Did you need to relocate to join the programme? *Explore decision-making around this.*
  - ALL: Were there any (other) sacrifices or compromises you needed to make to join the programme?



- ALL: How, if at all, did the Future Leaders Trust support you to help enable you to join the programme? Would you have taken part without this support?

### **ALL PARTICIPANTS: Impact on the Future Leader and the school**

- How has Future Leaders impacted on your development/achievement? *Interviewer to probe for each of the previously stated aims and objectives.*
  - In relation to your personal learning objectives?
  - In relation to your wider aims and objectives?
- Thinking about each of the impacts you just discussed, which elements of the Future Leaders programme do you think were the most beneficial in developing this? Why do you think that is?
  - What worked particularly well?
  - What did not work as well?
- Can you give me an example(s) of work, actions you have undertaken, or decisions you have made where you have used the skills or knowledge learned in the Future Leaders programme? *Note these descriptions developed here may be used for illustrative case studies so generate as much detail as possible. Interviewer to explore for each:*
  - at what stage of your time on the Future Leaders programme did you do this?
  - what impact did this work/action/decision have: on yourself; on the school; on the pupils; on something else?
  - which element(s) of the Future Leaders programme enabled you to have this impact? How did it do this?
  - did any other training, knowledge, or circumstances also influence you or enable this impact? What was this and was this critical to the overall success?
  - Are these impacts long or short term impacts?
  - Do you think you would have had a similar impact without what you learned on the Future Leaders Programme? Why is this?
  - Is there any further help or support that you think would have been beneficial from the Future Leaders programme to help you achieve this impact or to further this impact?
- Where did Future Leaders have most impact on you as an individual? And least impact?
- Where did Future Leaders have most impact on the school? And least impact?

- What other factors, if any, have impacted on these? *Interviewer to probe for:*
  - Contextual factors?
  - Other elements of training and development?
- Who/what else has influenced/had a significant impact on your learning outcomes since you took part in the Future Leaders programme?

### **ALL: Impact on the school**

- *Unless already covered when discussing school context:* What were the specific challenges or school improvement issues being experienced in the school when...  
*PARTICIPANTS:* ... you joined the Future Leaders programme?
- *RESIDENCY HEADS:* ... *your school became a residency school?*  
Interviewer to prompt as needed to explore a range of issues - *not just front of mind issues.*
- How has Future Leaders impacted on these issues/areas?
- Can you give me an example(s) of work, actions that were undertaken, or decisions made by the Future Leader which you think has had a particular impact on the school? This may include their impact initiative and/or any other impacts you think they have had. *Note these descriptions developed here may be used for illustrative case studies so generate as much detail as possible. Interviewer to explore for each:*
  - at what stage of their time with you did they do this?
  - what impact did this work/action/decision have: on the Future Leader; on the school; on the pupils; on something else?
  - which element(s) of the Future Leaders programme do you think enabled them to have this impact? How did it do this?
  - did any other training, knowledge, or circumstances also influence or enable this impact? What was this and was this critical to the overall success?
  - Are these impacts long or short term impacts?
  - Do you think you would have had a similar impact without the work of the Future Leaders? Why is this?
  - Is there any further help or support that you think would have been beneficial from the Future Leaders programme to help achieve this impact or to further this impact?
- Where did the Future Leader have most impact? And least impact?
- What other factors, if any, have impacted on these? *Interviewer to probe for:*



- Contextual factors?
- Other elements of training and development?

### **RESIDENCY HEADS: Focus on Years 2-3**

- RESIDENCY HEADS: Have you had a Future Leader in your school during their second or third year of the programme, or do you currently? *If yes, explore their perceptions of years 2 and 3.*
- How much and what development did you see in those leaders during those years?
- What was the impact on the school? *(Interviewer to use bullets from previous section if possible case study example emerges)*
- *If they are familiar with the modules taken by the Future Leader, were these the right ones for the leader? And for the school?*

### **PARTICIPANTS: Impact on Securing Senior Leadership and Headship**

*If not already covered:*

- ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE AT LEAST AT SENIOR LEADER LEVEL (NOT RESIDENCY HEADS): When did you enter this position? How long following your commencement on the Future Leaders programme?
- ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE AT LEAST AT SENIOR LEADER LEVEL (NOT RESIDENCY HEADS): How did Future Leaders help you secure your senior leadership role if at all? Do you think you would have secured this role at this point without Future Leaders? Why/Why not? Do you think you would have entered this role at the point you did if it has not been for your participation in Future Leaders? Why/why not? *Explore perceived barriers and how these were overcome.*
- Who/what else has influenced/had a significant impact on your progress to more senior roles during this time? How has this influenced/impacted on you?
- ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NOT HEADS: When do you expect to reach headship? e.g. within 18 months, 3 years, five years, over five years, or not at all. *(If not at all), Why not? What is it that informs that assessment/judgment e.g. your head has told you, other colleagues, your own assessment?*
- ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NOT HEADS: Do you see any barriers in the system to your reaching headship? Does Future Leaders remove any of/all of these barriers, or are there any remaining?

- PARTICIPANT HEADS: How did Future Leaders help you secure your headship role? Do you think you would have secured this role without Future Leaders? Why/Why not? *Explore perceived barriers and how these were overcome. If not already covered.*
- PARTICIPANTS: Did your level of confidence change through the programme? How? What do you attribute this to most? (What do you consider contributed to this change most?)
- PARTICIPANTS: And did your understanding of leadership change? In general? What about understanding of a challenging school in particular? What do you attribute this to most?
- PARTICIPANTS: How about your attitude to headship? Did that change at all? What do you attribute this to most?

#### **PARTICIPANTS EXCLUDING COHORT 2014: Headship Now! (Lower priority – cover if time)**

*If not already covered and respondent was deemed ready for headship during the programme:*

- What specific support was provided to support your headship application(s)? *Explore unprompted.*
- *If not mentioned, ask 'Have you been involved in any activities provided by 'Headship Now!'*?

*(Headship Now! elements include: Practical career support; Group sessions and personalised support e.g. coaching, application and interview support; Residential weekend; Additional support for women in overcoming barriers to headship)*

- IF USED HEADSHIP NOW!: Was Headship Now! useful for you? Why/Why not? *Record most/least impactful elements if mentioned.*

*Note that respondent may mention NPQH, which is offered in Year 4 of the programme. Explore this in brief, including whether it is considered part of Future Leaders or not. However, bear in mind that NPQH is delivered under a separate contract to Future Leaders. Therefore, when respondents are feeding back on the impact of Future Leaders on them/their school, ensure that they do not include NPQH within this. Ask them to differentiate where necessary.*

*Also note that from 2015 onwards (and there are about 20 Future Leaders enrolled on the 2015 HN! programme), HN! and NPQH have been combined into one programme. There is a fee for this programme. It is possible for participants*

### **ALL: Peer Support and the Headship Institute (incl. Year 4-5)**

- ALL: One of the aims of the programme is for senior leaders and heads to feel supported by a trusted peer network, leading up to headship (*if relevant*: and in headship itself). In your experience, was this achieved? *If time ask*: How? What support did it provide? How has this impacted on you and your school?
- IF NOT MENTIONED AND A PARTICIPANT HEAD OR RESIDENCY HEAD: What is your experience of the Headship Institute? Have you been involved in its activities? Which ones? How has it supported you and your school? What impact has this had? Could it have supported you any further? How? *Explore views and experiences.*
- ALL PARTICIPANTS FROM COHORT 2010 OR EARLIER AND NOW A HEAD: Have you heard of or been involved with any activities of the Headship Institute? What are your experiences? (*if used*:) What has been most/least useful? What impact has this support had on you?

*(Headship Institute Elements include: First 100 days support in managing finances/media; Peer-led school visits; Media training; Ofsted training; Heads Development Centre in year 2; Annual Headship Institute Symposium. Participants who are not heads may have heard of the Headship Institute but in order to be involved in the activities of the Headship Institute, you must be a head)*

### **ALL: Learning Outcome Areas**

- *Unless mentioned already*: How has Future Leaders made an impact in your case in the following areas of leadership:
  - Leadership of Teaching and Learning?
  - Leadership of School Culture?
  - Leadership of the Organisation?
  - Leadership of People?

### **ALL: Giving Back and Sustaining Improvement**

- *PARTICIPANTS, Unless mentioned already*: What is your view on giving back, i.e. becoming part of delivering the Future Leaders Programme, as you progress? (If exited, ask 'What did you think about this idea?')

- In what ways have you done this to date/ do you intend to do this? (if already done): What has been your experience? Has this been difficult or easy? Useful or not useful?
- *IF EARLY COHORT: how does the support you offer to current participants differ from the support you received through the FL programme, if at all?*
- ALL: We have talked about the improvements made in your school. How do you plan to sustain and build on these? (Or) Are there any other future plans for continuing to tackle issues/build on school improvement?
- Do you see Future Leaders being part of this? In what ways/why not?
- IF ON A BREAK: Can you tell us a little about your plans to return to the programme, and any thoughts you have on the timings of this.
- Has Future Leaders met the expectations you had at the beginning? In what ways has it met these? In what ways has it not met these?

#### **ALL: Personal and school investment/VFM**

- Overall, how would you describe what you have invested in the programme (to date)? (time/other)  
*Explore overall, and record differences by year of the programme (1-4) if raised.*
- Do you consider that this investment has been worthwhile/value for money? Why? How do you define good value in this context? e.g. programme did/did not do what it said it would, was high quality, compared favourably/less favourably to other programmes participated in.
- And how would you describe the level of investment that has been made in...*PARTICIPANTS: ... yourself as a Future Leader? RESIDENCY HEADS: ... your school as a residency school and yourself as head of that school?*  
*Explore overall, and record differences by year of the programme (1-4) if raised.*
- Do you consider that this investment is worthwhile/value for money (clarify whether they mean either for the participant/the school/NCTL) Why?  
*Allow respondent to determine what in relation to e.g. securing headship for the school, effective leadership, school improvement, closing the attainment gap.*

- How does your experience on the different elements of the Future Leaders compare to other types of leadership development programmes or courses you have attended/taken part in?

### **ALL: Wrap Up**

- Do you have anything else to add on the Future Leaders programme – good or bad - its activities, the experience you have had to date and in particular the impacts and outcomes for you and your school(s) that you would like to add before we close? *Explore in depth*

*Switch off audio and confirm this is switched off*

- Do you have any final questions about this research?

Thank you very much for your time. Your feedback will be very important in helping decision-making on the Future Leaders programme.

- **ALL EXCEPT RESIDENCY HEADS AND EXITED PARTICIPANTS:** As mentioned, you can be awarded 4 hours of payback within the Future Leaders programme as a thank you for giving your time to this research. Can you confirm that you are happy for us to pass your name back to Future Leaders at the end of this research process, for them to facilitate this? Please be assured that we only pass back names and not any of your feedback today. There is no obligation, if you prefer your name not to be disclosed.  
*Yes / No (If no, write a note in the depth diary)*



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

[college.evaluation@education.gov.uk](mailto:college.evaluation@education.gov.uk) or [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

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