TSC Regional Leadership Development Programmes

Executive Headteacher and Headship Accelerator Programmes

Pilot Report and Evaluation

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Introduction

This report summarises and evaluates the benefits, costs and outcomes of two senior leadership development programmes at the end of their initial pilot phase. It follows a briefer, more quantitative report in July 2017 and is accompanied by a 'repository' of the protocols, plans, materials and resources developed for the two programmes, as a guide for the future development.

The two programmes reported here were part of a four-strand initiative funded from the National College for Teaching and Leadership's Targeted Support Fund. The four strands were:
1.	Developing Unprepared Heads
2.	Developing Executive Heads
3.	NQT Retention
4.	Developing Middle System Leaders

This report focuses on the pilot phase of two programmes designed for senior leadership: Executive Heads and Accelerator Heads (previously Unprepared Heads). The proposal was developed by the West Midlands Teaching Schools Council (TSC) Representative, supported by the regional Strategic Board of teaching school representatives and the West Midlands TSC Co-ordinator (Kelvin Peel). Paul Crisp and colleagues from the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) provided design and logistical support and acted as programme co-ordinator.

Both Executive Heads and Accelerator Heads were distinctive programmes, developed in direct response to an identified need in the region; design groups included members of the intended beneficiaries of the programmes, together with regional teaching school personnel with experience of related projects.

The programmes were experimental in how they were conceived, developed and run, and furthermore, have not yet been completed. The focus of this report, therefore, at the end of the pilot phase, is to paint as complete a picture as possible, in order to support informed decisions about moving forwards, and to provide the necessary knowledge for doing so.

Executive Summary

This section summarises the programme description, evaluation and recommendations set out in more detail in the Full Report with which there is some duplication.

 The programmes were commissioned in November 2016. They were then researched and designed during November and December; promotion and recruitment took place during December 2016-January 2017. The first sessions for both programmes were conducted in February 2017, and the final ones took place in early May.

Design Phase

The programmes were designed using the following methods:

- Reviewing the evidence of effective practice (in particular the DfE CPD Standard)
- Surveying potential users and beneficiaries in the region
- Convening design workshops where representatives came together to evaluate the data gathered and co-design the ensuing programmes

The numbers involved in this process are set out in the table below:

Engagement method	Executive Heads	Accelerator (*) Heads
Initial survey	23	19
Interest in design workshop	26	12
Attended co-construction design workshop	6	7

Participants

It was clear from local research that there were a significant number of leaders in the region who would benefit from the programmes. Nonetheless, recruitment posed a significant challenge at the time of year (December-January) and at short notice (6 weeks including Christmas). The programmes were designed to accommodate the considerable work pressures experienced by participants; however, it wasn't possible to construct one that made no demands on participants' time. This proved to be especially true for the Accelerator Heads programme which did not recruit as well as the Executive Heads' and where participants struggled to make the time to attend. The numbers engaged at each stage are summarised below:

Stage	Executive heads	Accelerator heads
Expressed interest in programme	26	12
Participated at design stage	8	6
Applied to join programme	20	15
Participated at least one session	15	7
Participated in 50%+	12	4
Saw programme to conclusion	9	3

Providers

One objective of the programme was to build capacity in the local system through the participants and by developing a cadre of trained and experienced personnel capable of running future iterations of the programme (or by building new programmes which improved on these pilots). Teaching schools in the region were particularly encouraged to take part and a short training seminar was offered before the first participant workshop. In addition, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) collaborated with the programme coordinators to contribute to design thinking and to source appropriate expertise. Securing the active participation of serving teaching school personnel proved challenging owing to the short notice and the mid-year start of the programme (as discussed above) but we were able to incorporate into the delivery team a number of teaching school associates. ASCL provided both a coach and a number of people to act as 'expert witnesses'. The numbers of provider personnel were as follows:

Role	Via TSA	Via ASCL	Via CUREE
Expressed interest in facilitation role	7	1	2
Attended facilitators' workshop	2	2	1
Session facilitator	1		1
Coach or mentor	2	2	4
Expert witness	1	3	2

Content and process

The design aimed to achieve the following key elements (which are discussed in greater depth later in the report):

- establish a learning culture;
- create opportunities for head teachers to learn from each other; and
- provide a window into a wide range of practices and contexts beyond those directly experienced by head teachers.

Each programme consisted of four sessions, three hours in length, which ran between February and May at approximately three weekly intervals (excluding Easter).

The programmes provided a combination of coaching (in more than one form); multiple case-study examples of aspects of the role(s) together with an introductory analysis; and expert inputs. Those inputs were, for Accelerator Heads, largely pre-defined but with some adjustment during the programme; and for Executive Heads, responsive to the expressed needs of the group. Inputs were from both serving leaders (e.g. a head teacher, a Multiple Academy Trust CEO) and from specialists or from outside the sector (e.g. a mergers and acquisitions lawyer) to give some breadth, variety of perspective and some external challenge. Both groups related more easily to the serving leaders and would likely have welcomed more, although the programme recognised that it is important to maintain a combination of perspectives and some challenging content. The analysed case studies (referred to as 'Open Space' and 'Pooling and analysis' below) were welcomed, worked particularly well and offered a very time efficient means of exposing the participants to a range of examples (compared to, for instance, visiting individual schools).

There was considerable adaptation of content during the programme in response to summary and feedback activities at the end of each session. This included rescheduling a date to avoid a key event, switching the time of the sessions and adding a topic.

Element	Executive Heads	Accelerator Heads
Expert inputs on a key topic	x	x
Action Learning Set (a group coaching technique)	x	x
Open Space activity (reviewing analysed case studies of particular issues e.g. roles and responsibilities)	x	
Pooling and analysis of approaches	x	
Meta-planning (around strategic planning)		x

Timing and logistics

A design principle for both programmes was that they should be as respectful as possible of the time pressures on the participants; therefore, sessions were planned to be both local and short. However, 'local' in the West Midlands context is a challenge which ultimately can only be met by running the programme in multiple locations, something which was not possible in the pilot phase. The locations which were chosen – Manor Primary School in Wolverhampton and Polesworth School near Tamworth in North Warwickshire – were intended to be easy to access from across the region; nevertheless, many participants faced travel difficulties and conflicting demands on their time. Attendance patterns suggested that Executive Heads could exercise greater control over their own time deployment; they tended to miss sessions for previously scheduled commitments. Where it was possible to make contact, participants who had missed sessions were briefed; in addition, all materials provided in each session were posted to a Cloud-hosted shared drive.

Time of day was also an issue in particular for Accelerator Heads, who had difficulty in extracting themselves from commitments once in school. However, a trial in moving from an afternoon to a morning session was found to have no beneficial effect. Executive Heads, on the whole, were happy with the mid-afternoon/twilight slot.

Participants confirmed that the length of the sessions (2½ - 3 hours) was suitable for them; most said sessions could be a longer. Those who completed the programme also felt it should be extended by two further sessions (from 4 to 6 sessions).

Coaching

Coaching was an integral element of the programmes. Both used a group co-coaching model called Action Learning Sets (ALS), which was used during sessions. For Accelerator Heads, we organised and

facilitated a mixture of specialist coaching or mentoring, totalling, on average, four hours across the two terms of the programme. This was extensively used and reported as very valuable by the participants; for four participants, coaching was the mainstay of their engagement. ALS also worked well for most Executive Heads, bar two who were uncomfortable about the degree of sharing. Similarly, few Executive Heads activated the co-coaching relationships we brokered during the programme, but were keen to use them afterwards. During the programmes inter-sessional specialist coaching/mentoring was provided for 10 participants, supplemented with informal coaching either during or immediately after sessions.

Costs

The costs of the programme so far are set out below. Note that the design and set up costs cover all four of the Targeted Support Fund programmes, but delivery costs relate just to the two senior leader programmes. The design costs would not be incurred for second and subsequent iterations, although there would be additional promotion and recruitment costs.

Activity	Executive Heads	Accelerator Heads	All Programmes
Design and set-up			£9,200
Session planning and delivery	£9,500	£8,300	
Coaching/mentoring			£2300
Session delivery per planned participant	£475	£553	
Session delivery per actual participant	£633	£1185	
Coaching/mentoring per participant			£250

Recommendations

This section of the report makes detailed operational recommendations against each element of the process for the programme overall and, where relevant, for the separate development programmes. The headline recommendations (subject to funding availability) are summarised below:

- The **Executive Heads'** programme has met a genuine need and should be run again in broadly the same form as the pilot to test and refine some adaptations, including the closer involvement of one or more teaching schools acting as joint co-ordinators
- The **Accelerator Heads'** programme is more problematic. The need is clearly substantial but we need more effective ways of reaching and recruiting a substantial cohort matching the target participant profile. The time challenges on this group are so significant that further versions of the programme should shift the balance in favour of coaching support and reduce the elements which require fixed times out of school.

FULL REPORT

Consultation Design and Set up

The Need

A consultation process managed by the West Midlands Teaching School Council (TSC) Strategy Board identified four areas of development need:

1. **Executive Heads**
2. **Senior leaders thrust into headship without preparation (Unprepared heads)**
3. Middle leaders supporting others beyond their schools and

4. NQTs in areas of high attrition (particularly in Walsall and Wolverhampton)

The region was successful in winning Targeted Support Fund support for all four development areas but the focus of this report is on the two senior leadership programmes (listed as items 1 and 2 above).

These pilots were distinctive in their extensive programme of regional consultation about the programme design and content. This was designed not only to ensure the programmes spoke to real needs and experiences but also to build interest in participating in and contributing to the development of regional leadership development capacity. The consultation involved surveys, canvassing interest in and ideas to be explored during design workshops, and convening those workshops and analysing the results. The table below records the number of people participating at each stage:

Engagement method	Executive Heads	Accelerator (*) Heads
Initial survey	23	19
Interest in design workshop	26	12
Attended co-construction design workshop	6	7

(*) the title chosen later to represent this group also known as the unprepared or 'anointed, not appointed' group

The participants in the design sessions were invited to reflect on the results of the other consultations and the evidence about effective leadership development to help prioritise and identify key features of the programmes. Separate workshops were held for each programme but the resulting principles, derived in the workshops, were thought relevant to both groups. The programmes:

*   should be adaptable and be flexed to accommodate the specific needs of the participants;
*   needed to recognise the work demands on the participants and should aim to minimise the amount of time out of school the programme required;
*   should include a substantial amount of coaching support both during and between any face-to-face sessions; and
*   should be short – not more than three hours long – and over separate sessions at roughly three-weekly intervals.

In addition to these shared features, the workshops identified some key desirable differences.
*   Accelerator (unprepared) Heads:
    o   were likely to have identifiable knowledge gaps in some common areas – e.g. HR, staff performance and structures, finance (particularly financial planning); and
    o   would benefit from both mentoring and specialist coaching.
*   Executive Head's needs were distinctive in that:
    o   their knowledge needs would be more varied and unpredictable;
    o   they would have valuable information to offer as well to access from others; and
    o   they were more likely to benefit from and value contributing to co-coaching approach, which would more accurately reflect the greater experience in leadership of this group.

Further design requirements were established by reference to, for instance, the National CPD Standard. These were:
*   establishing a network of colleagues in similar situations;
*   creating opportunities to meet and learn from expert witnesses;
*   creating a curated pool of resources including examples of good and bad practices shared by other participants or sourced by the programme managers; and
*   maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of sessions through, for example using Action Learning Sets (ALS) to provide both bespoke support and coaching at the same time as providing windows into the practices and experiences of a range of peers

Delivery Partners

One objective of the programme was to build capacity in the local system by developing a cadre of trained and experienced personnel capable of running future iterations of the programme, or of building new programmes which improved on these pilots. Teaching schools in the region were encouraged to take part and a short training seminar was offered before the first participant workshop. In addition, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) collaborated with the programme coordinators to contribute to design thinking and to source appropriate expertise. Securing the active participation of serving teaching school personnel proved challenging, owing to the short notice and the mid-year start of the programme, but we were able to incorporate into the delivery team a number of teaching school associates. ASCL provided both a coach and a number of people to act as 'expert witnesses'. The numbers of provider personnel were as follows:

Role	Via TSA	Via ASCL	Via CUREE
Expressed interest in facilitation role	7	1	2
Attended facilitators' workshop	2	2	1
Session facilitator	1		1
Coach or mentor	2	2	4
Expert witness	1	3	2

Timing/timescales

During the design phase a structure and rhythm was established for the sessions. Participants agreed on a structure that involved:
- 4 sessions, with 3-week gaps in between sessions; and
- sessions to taking place at the end of the school day, to avoid conflicting with duties during the day.

Feedback after completion of the programme actually suggested that:
- Executive Head teachers would prefer 6 sessions over 2 terms. The timing of the event (3-6pm) worked, but they would rather move venues each session to share the logistical challenges of cross regional working.
- Accelerator Head teachers wanted more sessions over a longer period of time. Sessions were moved from afternoon slot to morning with the aim of improving attendance rates, based on their feedback. However attendance rates actually decreased for the final two morning sessions.
- During session 2 for both programmes, it was decided to extend finish times from 5.30pm to 6.00 pm.

Recruitment, participation and retention

Key Recruitment Activity

In summary, the main building blocks for supporting recruitment, participation and retention involved:
- using surveys to canvass views about needs and wants amongst TSC and CUREE contacts;
- conducting design workshops with colleagues in the same/similar job roles to inform prioritisation for foci, and using the resulting evidence to design the process and content;
- carefully coordinating the logistics of running the programme (hiring venues, choosing suitable dates taking school holidays into account, suitable time for events etc.);
- advertising and marketing the programmes with tailored resources via website, mailing list/ email, Twitter and networks already developed by regional TSC key actors; and

● recruiting colleagues to the programme and carrying out interviews to understand their role/position and needs.

Recruitment

Recruitment proved to be challenging in the timescale, particularly for Accelerator Heads. The project deadlines required a mid-year start at only 6 weeks' notice, a period including the Christmas holiday. Target programme publicity at Executive Heads was easier, as they could often be identified from sources such as Edubase. However, there were no data bases for identifying *Accelerator* heads - although local soft intelligence suggested there were, at the time, over a hundred in just two LA areas in the region.

The overall pattern of engagement from expression of interest to complete participation is shown in the table below:

Stage	Executive heads	Accelerator heads
Expressed interest in programme	26	12
Participated at design stage	8	6
Applied to join programme	20	15
Participated at least one session	15	7
Participated in 50%+	12	4
Saw programme to conclusion	9	3

Participation - Executive Head teachers

The initial sign up to the Executive Headteacher programme was 20, although it was clear from the start, not least because of the short notice, that attendance would be very variable; Executive Heads have many fixed commitments and meetings to attend. The stakes for missing a session were low and the schedule was set in advance with little notice, so there were many clashes. The overall numbers were:

● 1st Session: 15 participants
● 2nd Session: 12 participants
● 3rd Session: 10 participants
● 4th Session: 9 participants

Reasons for absences included:
• Inspections;
• pre-determined governors meetings; and
• unexpected (and usually last minute i.e. on the day) crises within other schools in the MAT/ federation.

The absence of fees and low penalties for absence, coupled with the short notice for the sessions/programme, resulted in heads regarding dropping in and out of the programme as more acceptable than was appropriate. The facilitation team may have contributed to this through their efforts to provide catch-up briefings for participants who missed sessions and through sharing most of the session resources online. That said, the Executive Heads preferred to concentrate their engagement with the programme in the sessions themselves (and were content to see more and longer sessions) rather than complete other activities between sessions – putting some cognitive distance between the programme's more strategic focus and their day-to-day pressures.

Participation – Accelerator (Unprepared) Head teachers

Despite the large-scale pool of potential participants and assiduous networking by the team supporting the pilot, particularly the Regional Teaching Schools' Co-ordinator, only fifteen Acceleratory Head teacher participants were identified and recruited to the programme. Barriers to recruitment included:

- lack of intelligence about which heads had been "anointed" in post without having chosen to become a head teacher or been involved in preparatory training; and
- problems in communicating the nature of the target group. For example, some potential applicants who expressed an interest were not actually heads or even deputies but were colleagues seeking an accelerated route to becoming heads. The title used for recruitment ("accelerator heads") emerged in the design consultation process and may have been confusing. It is our impression that titles such as "unprepared heads" or even "Anointed but not Appointed" heads might have communicated more clearly the target group.

Two colleagues were not actually heads but deputies who had been thrust into roles in which they were having to contemplate headship without preparation, and were using the programme to weigh up sensible preparation methods for accelerated headship. One early participant was not, in reality, eligible because she was currently operating at third tier and had signed up largely to support her colleague. This participant was discouraged from continuing as the sessions were simply not designed to meet her needs. The majority of participants were from primary schools and there was feedback from the secondary members that they felt that their circumstances were not well represented (particularly group discussion).

Colleagues from the identified target group struggled to make time to attend all sessions. This suggested that other colleagues in this position may simply have decided they could not afford to invest in their own learning when new in post, because their appointment had almost always been triggered by significant in-school problems. The pattern of attendance per session was as follows:
- 1st Session: 7 participants
- 2nd Session: 5 participants
- 3rd Session: 4 participants
- 4th Session: 3 participants

All participants were from challenging school environments and lacked leadership support, thus their attendance was vulnerable to the high levels of volatility in their schools. There were also a high number of drop outs on the day from people who had planned to attend right up to the last minute. On the other hand, there was quite a high take up of specialist coaching support between sessions for those who attended the first or second session (5 participants used of at least 1 hour of specialist coaching) and those who did remain greatly valued the programme.

Timing and logistics

A design principle for both programmes was that they should be as respectful as possible of the time pressures on the participants; therefore, sessions were planned to be both local and short. However, 'local' in the West Midlands context is a challenge which ultimately can only be met by running the programme in multiple locations, something which was not possible in the pilot phase. The locations which were chosen – Manor Primary School in Wolverhampton and Polesworth School near Tamworth in North Warwickshire – were intended to be easy to access from across the region; nevertheless, many participants faced travel difficulties and conflicting demands on their time. Attendance patterns suggested that Executive Heads could exercise greater control over their own time deployment; they tended to miss sessions for previously scheduled commitments. Where it was possible to make contact, participants who had missed sessions were briefed; in addition, all materials provided in each session were posted to a Cloud-hosted shared drive.

Time of day was also an issue in particular for Accelerator Heads, who had difficulty in extracting themselves from commitments once in school. However, a trial in moving from an afternoon to a morning session was found to have no beneficial effect. Executive Heads, on the whole, were happy with the mid-afternoon/twilight slot.

Participants confirmed that the length of the sessions (2½ - 3 hours) was suitable for them; most said sessions could be a longer. Those who completed the programme also felt it should be extended by two further sessions (from 4 to 6 sessions).

Structure and content

Core Programme Features

There was, of course, existing training provision for heads and executive heads which these programmes were not intended to replicate. The National Professional Qualifications were being re-specified at the time and there was no NPQ for executive heads. In any case, NPQs tended to run over a long period (typically a year) and were designed to be comprehensive in their coverage against a nationally determined specification. These specific regional programmes were intended to be different; they were designed collaboratively with heads in the region as an initiative to be responsive to need, to develop regional leadership capacity and to have the following key, distinctive features:

- Recognition of the substantial but variable experience of the participants
- Matching content and process to participants' needs (issues faced in these roles)
- Consistency of content and process with the authoritative evidence of effective practice in professional and leadership development
- Extensive use of peer support/coaching to recognise that the participants are contributors not just passive recipients
- An engaging, motivating and challenging process – generating outputs which support both self and programme evaluation

Content and rhythm

The programmes consisted of four sessions of approximately three hours in length, which ran from February to May at roughly three weekly intervals (excluding Easter). Although sessions varied over time in response to participant feedback, each session followed a broadly standard pattern. There were some differences between the two strands, as illustrated below:

Element	Executive Heads	Accelerator Heads
Expert inputs on a key topic	x	x
Action Learning Set (a group coaching technique)	x	x
Open Space activity (reviewing analysed case studies of particular issues e.g. roles and responsibilities)	x	
Pooling and analysis of approaches	x	
Meta-planning (around strategic planning)		x

Content Elements

Evidence about professional learning for head teachers gives particular emphasis to:

- establishing a learning culture
- creating opportunities for head teachers to learn from each other; and
- providing a window into a wide range of practices and contexts beyond those directly experienced.

Action Learning Sets, Coaching and Co-coaching

As mentioned above, published research and local input to the design process emphasised the value of coaching (and mentoring) to leadership development, reflected in the programme design. Owing to the lack of collaboration in conventional coaching, Action Learning Sets were introduced as an

established (although not widely used in the sector) method of meeting the aims of the programme, supplemented by more traditional coaching scheduled between sessions. The protocols for ALS and the evidence underpinning them make a significant contribution to establishing a learning culture; the process of actively listening to and formulating questions to support other problem holders provides access to and prompts reflective analysis of participants' day-to-day working challenges, thus expanding opportunities to learn from each other's practices and experiences.

For Accelerator Heads, we organised and facilitated a mixture of specialist coaching or mentoring totalling, on average, four hours across the two terms of the programme, something which was extensively used and reported as very valuable by the participants. We anticipated Executive Heads to be more experienced and therefore more interested in and engaged with co-coaching both through the ALS process and individual one-to-one sessions which we brokered. In practice, ALS worked well for all bar two Executive Heads; these colleagues were uncomfortable about that degree of public sharing. Similarly, few activated the co-coaching relationships brokered during the programme, but were keen to use them afterward. During the programmes inter-sessional specialist coaching/mentoring was provided for 10 participants, supplemented with informal coaching during or immediately following sessions.

A key issue about ALS was that it requires consistency of participation and the development of trust to be effective – and it has to operate within narrow group size tolerances. The challenges for many participants around diary conflicts and attendance limited the effectiveness of the approach. It was also probably ambitious to start the ALS process in the inaugural session before members had got to know each other and more attention needs to be given set up and introductions in future.

Participant feedback identified the following aspects as helpful:
- Exploring the issues of others
- Exploring own issues
- Discussion between colleagues
- Networking
- Discussion in groups, sharing content
- New way of approaching issues
- ALS/coaching sets/ activity
- Talking and listening to others about experiences and challenges they were facing that are similar to my own

The following suggestions were made by participants about how make the sessions more valuable:
- "Additional time for setting up and running ALS"
- "Longer talking to each other"
- "Activities designed for us to get to know each other better"

Open Space, Pooling and Analysis

Participants were keen to access examples of practice from each other and from the wider field. However, the simple accumulation of cases (of, for instance, schemes of delegation or role definitions) has been shown to be a time consuming way of acquiring a limited amount of knowledge and can amount to little more than opportunities for 'tourism' or 'tips and tricks' if no underpinning patterns or principles are revealed. The Open Space and Pooling activities provided for the collection, curation, analysis and exploration of pooled examples of key policies and leadership tools. By pulling these together in advance of the session and providing an analysis of the patterns within the examples – with the examples themselves - the programme made time for exploration, discussion and reflection on the topics represented. This offered highly prized, practical support, in the form of resources that could be evaluated collectively, and also adapted for individual contexts.

Expert inputs

Executive Heads were anticipated by design groups to have specific and individual requirements for the expertise input from external contributors; therefore, this was not specified in advance. The design groups also expected Executive Heads to be 'expert witnesses' to each other, another aspect which was built into the original design. It was anticipated that Accelerator Heads, on the other hand, would not necessarily know what they did not know, so the design group pre-specified key inputs around finance, HR and staffing etc.

The 'expert witness' contributions were as follows:

Topic	Contributor
Executive Heads	
The underpinning rationale and evidence on which the programme is built	Philippa Cordingley – CEO CUREE
Trustees' and Governors' expectations of Executive Heads	Paul Crisp – National Leader of Governance
Journey from HT to Exec Head	Phillip Hamilton – CEO Community Academies Trust
Learning from other sectors - mergers and acquisitions	Paul Bennett – Senior Partner at George Green LLP
Accelerator Heads	
Priorities and delegation	Peter Thomas – CEO The Futures Trust
Staff management & performance (HR)	Paul Miner – Browne Jacobson LLP
Financial Planning	Julia Harnden – ASCL
Bear traps around statutory functions and compliance	Andrew Edwards – The Revel Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Tools and Techniques for Planning the Future*	Paul Crisp

* added at request of group

Responsiveness/personalisation and adaptations

A key goal was to experiment with ways of supporting the target groups responsively. Examples of responsiveness included:

- As a result of feedback from Executive Head teachers in session 1 and 2, session 3 provided three options for activities – ALS, extended discussions with an expert witness or exploration of Schemes of Delegation. In the event the powerful contributions of the Expert Witness, an experienced Executive Head, the urgency of resolving a number of tricky issues relating to schemes of delegation and a desire to experiment further with forms of learning, led participants to select the latter two options.
- The selection of expert contributions flowed directly from requests from participants and input from design sessions and feedback forms (and plenary debriefing discussion for the Executive Heads group).
- Accelerator Headship sessions were adjusted in response to participants' requests. For example:
  - o the dates were moved to avoid exams;
  - o coaches were carefully matched to participants' priorities;
  - o the time was changed from afternoon to morning in an attempt to increase retention and attendance as the Heads themselves thought it better to go straight to an event rather than go into school first and get caught up in work/crises; and
  - o an additional topic - tools and techniques for planning the future - was added to the final session.

Costs

The costs of the programme are set out below. Note that the design and set up costs covered all four of the Targeted Support Fund programmes but delivery costs relate just to the two senior leader programmes. A small additional cost (about £5,000 - not included below) was incurred in relation to the reporting and evaluation.

The design costs would not be incurred for second and subsequent iterations, although there would be some promotion and recruitment costs. Excluding the development costs – which included an unusually large amount of market research and co-development – the costs per participant compare:

- very favourably with other programmes for Executive Heads, where courses tended to be £5,000+ per head; and
- less favourably but still in the same broad territory for Accelerator Heads when compared against plan but rather less so when compared against the actual participants.

These cost profiles reveal the obvious point that cohort size is the key feature. Both programmes are likely viable at a group size of above 10.

Activity	Executive Heads	Accelerator Heads	All Programmes
Design and set-up			£9,200
Session planning and delivery	£9,500	£8,300	
Coaching/mentoring			£2300
Session delivery per planned participant	£475	£553	
Session delivery per actual participant	£633	£1185	
Coaching/mentoring per participant			£250

Infrastructure, capacity and experience legacy

One purpose of the project was to develop and test the feasibility of designing and running locally responsive leadership development programmes for particular target groups **and to enhance the leadership development capacity of the local system**. This was to be achieved by developing a set of programme designs and associated resources, and a cadre of facilitators – located mainly in the region's teaching schools.

Resources

The first of these objectives is extensively delivered in a repository containing:
- Marketing materials
- Recruitment emails
- Venue specifications
- Survey questions and pre-event questionnaires
- Individual session PowerPoints and Session timetable/plans
- Action planning templates
- Open space and meta-planning activities
- Risk analysis templates
- Planning graphics and workshop summaries
- Feedback forms
- Coaching pairs and coaching conversation templates

This would enable one or more suitably briefed facilitators to run the programmes again largely as originally designed or to adapt them; recommendations are suggested below about how this might be further developed.

Expertise

A significant number of leaders and other senior practitioners participated in the programmes either in the delivery team or as participants. Together, they represent a cadre of 12 – 15 people who could contribute to further iterations of the programme (or adaptations of it). However, it is unlikely that they could run a complete programme without some support from the pilot programme managers.

Teaching schools

The report describes the efforts to recruit teaching schools into the delivery process and set out the reasons for a limited success in drawing them in as session facilitators. We were able to recruit four people *via* teaching schools, as coaches, an expert witness and one facilitator mobilising coaches from ASCL and across the region.

Participants

Twelve participants completed the entire programme and would be able, with support, to facilitate further iterations of it. A number of the Executive Head participants were actively interested in facilitating or acting as coach on the Accelerator programme but were unable to commit to all the dates without longer notice. Between them, this group represent a significant potential resource for any future programme.

ASCL

ASCL were able to support the programme in the design phase and also by brokering a coach and a number of expert witnesses. ASCL's engagement was significant in other ways too – they provided a link to national leadership development. In particular,r ASCL, collaborating with a participating teaching school (and others outside the region), were able to use the experience to inform a successful proposal to run the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leaders from January 2018.

Implications and recommendations for future programmes

This report is written at approximately the midpoint of the programme which specified and funded two rounds. It is wholly appropriate therefore to review the experience of the pilots and to consider whether the second round should proceed (subject to available funds) and if so, the extent to which it should be modified. Neither programme has been replaced by the new form of NPQ, which tends to run over a long period (typically a year), and is designed to be comprehensive in coverage against a nationally determined specification. These specific regional programmes were intended to be different; they were designed collaboratively with heads in the region as an initiative to be responsive to need. In practice, both local programmes offer valuable short-form gateways to the more time demanding NPQs.

The table below outlines the various elements of the process and makes recommendations against each and for the two programmes separately. In summary, our headline recommendations are that, subject to available funding:

- The **Executive Heads'** programme has met a genuine need and should be run again in broadly the same form as the pilot to test and refine some adaptations, including the closer involvement of one or more teaching schools acting as joint co-ordinators
- The **Accelerator Heads'** programme is more problematic. The need is clearly substantial but we need more effective ways of reaching and recruiting a substantial cohort matching the target

participant profile. The time challenges on this group are so significant that further versions of the programme should shift the balance in favour of coaching support and reduce the elements which require fixed times out of school.

Recommendations

Issue	Executive Head	Accelerator Head
Recruitment	Previous methods were largely effective so recommend no change	Need for much better identification and targeting. Engage local networks (including LAs and MATs), HT associations, sub-regional TSA networks etc in the process - PLUS social media etc. Seriously consider making separate primary and secondary offer. The practical day-to-day realities are so different it is difficult for leaders from the two phases to learn a lot from each other
Timing	Difficult to reconcile the immediacy of the need with the practicalities of participants' availability but the compromise is probably a term's lead time between start of recruitment and start of programme	
Venue(s)	There is no one place convenient in the region although central Birmingham would be the least worst option. If numbers allowed, two separate venues should be offered. Otherwise, a viable alternative would be to run each *session* at a different venue (or perhaps just two different ones)	
Persistence/ buy-in	Considering the circumstances, retention was good but attendance at individual sessions was haphazard. Though this was the expected result of the short lead in time and the number of participants' prior commitments, there was a degree of drop-in/drop-out behaviour because the stakes for the individual were low. This failed to acknowledge the impact of non-participation on others. We would recommend either a) levying a contributory charge even if external funding is available or b) requiring a deposit refundable for those who complete the programme. We would recommend experimenting with some light touch assessment (through the completion of a mini-project) with some certification attached which we think would be of benefit	It is probably unrealistic, we believe, to expect 'Accelerator' heads to be able commit to the level and pattern of attendance the original programme design expected. But we think that causes of drop out and non-attendance were beyond the participants' control in the majority of cases. We think that the redesign recommended elsewhere in the paper will improve that. Most of the steps in improving participation are those practical ones around removing barriers but we would recommend (as for the Exec Heads) experimenting with some light touch assessment (through the completion of a mini-project) with some certification attached

Issue	Executive Head	Accelerator Head
Pattern of delivery	The pattern of multiple sessions of three hour's length about three weeks apart worked well but the programme needed two additional (i.e. total of six) sessions	The balance of delivery should be shifted in favour of more coaching and fewer, less frequent joint sessions (but these can be longer)
Inputs	The mix of inputs worked well but the expectation that the group would provide some of its own content (in the form of participants taking the role of expert witness) was misconceived or, at the least, mistimed. Contributions from practicing leaders (CEOs or EH) were particularly valued but a mix of this and more challenging inputs (including from outside the sector) should be maintained	The planned mix of topics and inputs worked well though, as for Exec Heads, contributions from serving school leaders were particularly valued but a stronger representation of primary experience would be better. An additional topic about strategic planning was added and should continue to feature. The programme is a tough ask for contributors as they need, in a short time, to provide practical guidance to over-stretched people but also to open up the underpinning principles and concepts. If the programme has a future life we should aim to build a panel of effective and relevant contributors willing to work in partnership with the programme managers
Activities	It is important that the programme makes demands on the participants and so are *active* but the activities have to be relevant and authentic. Executive Heads, we found, were unlikely to do a lot away from the sessions themselves. Structured and scaffolded in-session activities based on a collection of pre-analysed cases (e.g. schemes of delegation) worked well and should be reused and supplemented/updated	Similar considerations to the Executive Heads applied here too except that Accelerator Heads were more likely to undertake tasks (and coaching) between sessions. In-session activities need further development as our provision that the expert inputs would include some activity was rarely realised (beyond a discussion and Q&A element). Activities, like the structured case collection and analyses we prepared for Executive Heads, are needed to enable the group to get beyond their pragmatic 'tips and tricks' needs to a broader understanding of the concepts
Coaching	Action Learning Sets worked well for most of this group but they needed more time to get to know each other before getting into the Sets. We recommend continuing ALS but start it in the second session and run it only over the middle two or three sessions. The programme design included facilitating co-coaching relationships	ALS worked well for those members of the group who managed to attend for more than individual sessions. Expert coaching was brokered for a significant fraction and, for some, it was the only element of the programme they could consistently engage with. We recommend that this continues on broadly the same pattern. Two modifications would improve the programme a) an increase in the amount of coaching on offer and b) a larger panel of

Issue	Executive Head	Accelerator Head
	but the same confidence issues around the ALS arrangements inhibited the take up of co-coaching until the end of the programme. A number of participants already had executive coaches. We recommend continuing the co-coaching element but introducing it toward the end of the formal programme as a means of extending the networking process (explicitly part of the programme)	coaches from which to draw to improve the match been coach experience/skill and the participant's needs
Contributors	Teaching school personnel and associates made valuable individual contributions but there was limited buy in from the teaching school system (understandable given the timescale). We recommend that future iterations of the programme should ideally be co-ordinated by one or more teaching schools jointly (in the first instance, at least) with the pilot co-ordinators. We also recommend developing/selecting panels of coaches and expert witnesses (targeting local CEOs and school leaders) who can tailor their contributions to fit the programme design and objectives	

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