

Jubilee Networks

Impact Evaluation Report: Extended Summary

March 2024



1. Introduction and context

1.1 Organisational Context

Challenge Partners was founded by London-based headteachers in 2011 and is now a national partnership of schools and trusts. Challenge Partners believe that the best way to reduce educational inequality and enhance children's life chances is through collaboration.

This evaluation focuses on Jubilee Networks. These are networks which bring headteachers together, enabling them to build strong connections with peers across a region, and share knowledge, experience and strategies for school improvement. To date, the overall cohort is 40 headteachers.

1.2 Evaluation Context

ImpactEd Evaluation, part of the ImpactEd Group, is an award-winning social enterprise that exists to help evaluate, understand and improve impact in education. They address the 'evaluation deficit' within the education sector, helping schools and organisations to better understand what is working to make a difference to the lives of young people.

In November 2022, Challenge Partners commissioned ImpactEd Evaluation to carry out an evaluation of the Jubilee Networks programme. Challenge Partners wished to test the network model and its component parts to identify 1) key strengths, 2) opportunities for further improvement and 3) to understand what impact it has on driving school improvement and leadership development.

2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Aim and Research Questions

The overall aim of this evaluation is to:

measure the impact of the Jubilee Networks programme on headteachers and their schools, with insight into the relative strengths and opportunities for improvement of its components.

It is underpinned by the following research questions:

1. What impact does involvement in Jubilee Networks have on professional relationships with other school leaders?
2. How do Jubilee Networks facilitate support for headteachers and how does this contribute to their well-being?
3. What impact do Jubilee Networks have on school improvement?
4. What effect do Jubilee Networks have on the professional development of school leaders and other members of staff?
5. What elements of Jubilee Networks work well and what can be improved?

2.2 Evaluation Design

The evaluation used self-report surveys, interviews, focus groups and participant observation methods to collect data:

Event evaluation data were collected by Challenge Partners at three network events: two in 2022/23 and one in 2023/24. Event data were also collected following the network launch event, introduced into the programme at the start of the academic year 2023/24.

Online interviews were carried out with headteachers between July and December 2023 and in-person focus groups and observations were carried out at network events in June and December 2023.

2.3 Sample and data analysis

Quantitative sample

	2022/23		2023/24
	Start	End	Start
Programme Survey	n=12 from a potential 32 (38%)	n=7 from a potential 32 (22%)	n=24 from a potential 40 (60%)
Event Feedback Survey	n=46		n=18

Qualitative sample

- Headteacher interviews: n=6 (4 part of network for an academic year or more)
- Focus Group 1: n=5
- Focus Group 2: n=6

Quantitative data are presented in the form of bar and pie charts and measures of central tendency calculated and reported. The qualitative data has been analysed using a deductive thematic approach, meaning the data has been systematically coded to find common themes, drawing on examples where appropriate and then analysed.

2.4 Limitations

This methodology was designed to keep participant burden to a minimum and draw on existing data collected by Challenge Partners where possible. As such, the following limitations should be considered:

Sampling Methodology: As we are limited to data from those who responded to surveys and interviews, the group may not be representative. The sample is a substantial proportion of those who participated in the programme but is small in absolute terms. In addition, from data provided it was not possible to link responses to the extent of participation in the programme or to look at change over time for individuals, which may bias the results.

Qualitative Research: Large sections of this research are based on qualitative interviews with participants; these findings may not be generalisable to all individuals.

Bias in self-reported measures: self-report questionnaires like those used in this evaluation can contain inherent bias and will reflect participants' own views.

3. Key findings

The key findings are presented in relation to the five research questions.

1. What impact does involvement in Jubilee Networks have on professional relationships?

There is evidence to support the claim that Jubilee Networks is facilitating the development of strong professional relationships. In the event-specific feedback surveys, 94% of headteachers either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that meetings helped to deepen their relationships in the group and build social capital (n=47).

In focus groups headteachers reported having positive professional relationships and networking opportunities with those outside their school as a result of the network:

"It's been really good. Just to have those links and people that you can touch base with and ask for questions ... Networking is powerful, isn't it?"
(Headteacher)

Some implied that the relationships they had developed were something akin to comradeship:

"It's quite intense and you build relationships very quickly through the day. So I do feel I could contact any of them if I needed to."
(Headteacher)

Whilst the evidence suggests that the network facilitates the development of new professional relationships, there may be room to deepen this further beyond the immediate "buzz" of in-person meetings, to sustain relationships and influence headteachers' broader views of their professional network.

2. How do Jubilee Networks facilitate support for senior leaders and how does this contribute to their well-being?

While Jubilee Network headteachers' well-being was in line with national averages for school leaders, there is evidence that Jubilee Networks provided an important mechanism for headteachers to positively manage the demands of their role. For example, 88% of headteachers provided responses of 'somewhat agree' or higher to the statement 'as a school leader I have a network of peers outside of my school that can provide me with practical or moral support' (n=24).

Analysis of survey data indicates that one mechanism through which Jubilee Networks provides practical support to headteachers is by providing new insights and tools that are valuable and applicable to their leadership role.

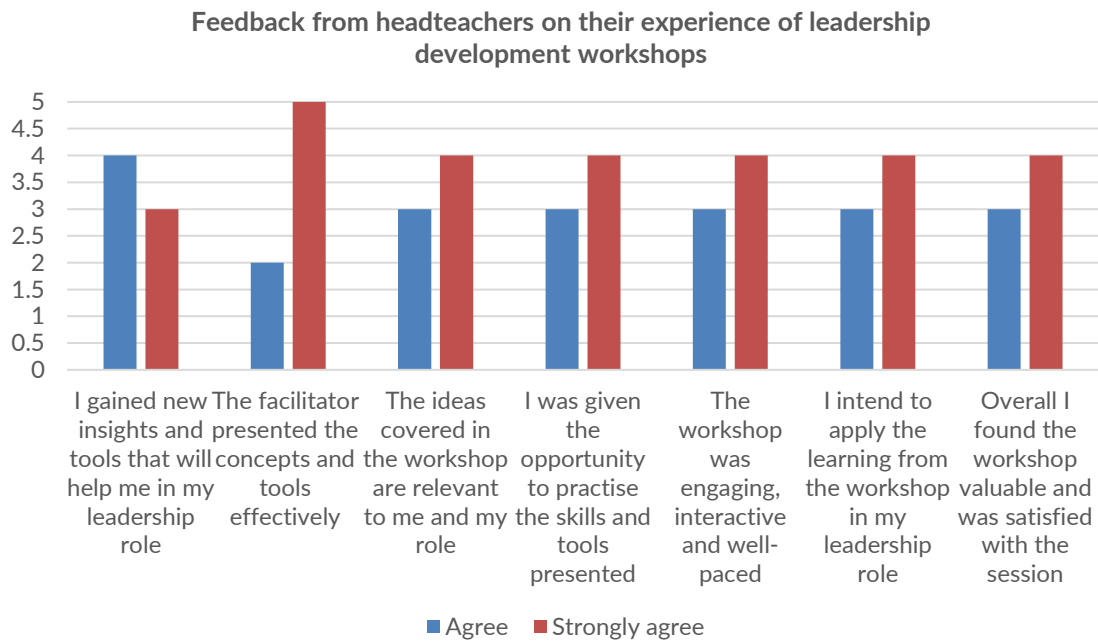


Figure 1: Ratings given by headteachers on their satisfaction of the leadership development workshops delivered by BTS Spark for academic year 2023/24 (n=17)

In focus groups headteachers described feeling part of a ‘team’ that went beyond professional relationships and extended into a support network:

“I know if I contact them and ask for a member of staff to go over or visit and vice versa, they would definitely do that. So it is a support network.” (Headteacher)

A culture of trust was perceived as a key driver of this support. Participants were willing to problem-solve together but sometimes uncomfortable and reluctant to challenge. Some headteachers however moved beyond this, ultimately finding value in the non-threatening nature of the network. The encouragement of sharing without fear of judgment compounds the network's supportive character. As one headteacher stated:

“It’s great to have a space where you can come, outside of your region and discuss the real issues without fear of any comeback. This feels like a real support network where what is said in the room, stays in the room. There’s no judgement.” (Headteacher)

3. What impact do Jubilee Networks have on school improvement?

Headteachers reported that visit days helped facilitate school improvement through sharing of good practice. When asked to rate the statement ‘as a headteacher I am regularly exposed to ways of examples of good practice in other schools’, all respondents rated ‘somewhat agree’ or above (n=43), suggesting that the network helps to share best practice across the sector.

There is evidence that the shared practice was being adopted in schools. As seen in figure 2 below, 88% of headteachers attending events in 2022/23 stated they agreed or strongly

agreed that they planned to use something they learnt at the event, within their schools in the short term, whilst 100% said they planned to use something in the long term (n=42).

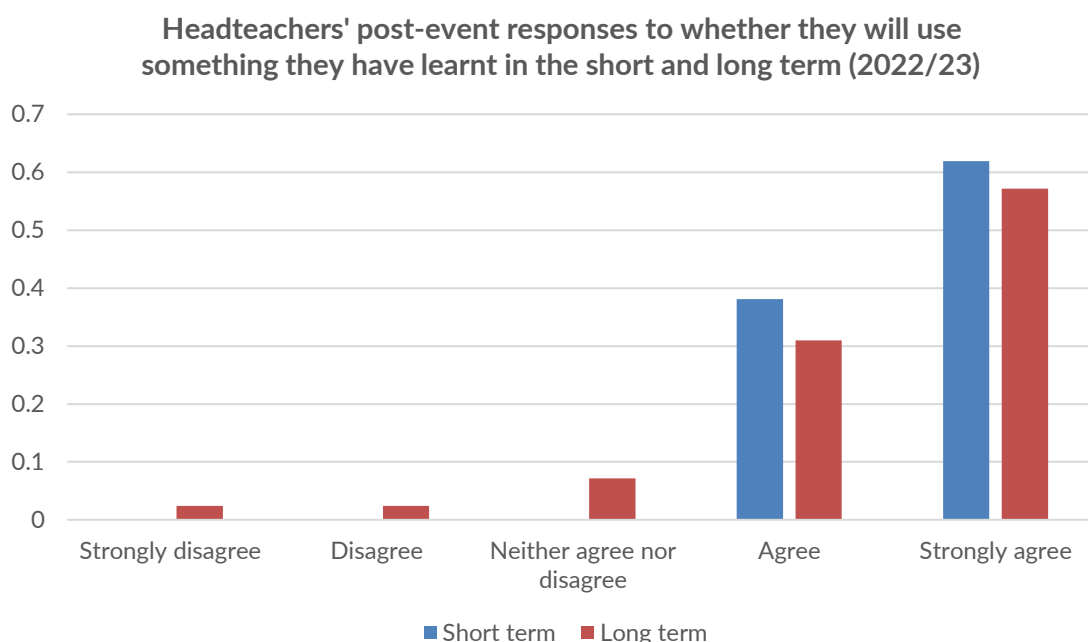


Figure 2: Headteachers' (n=42) post-event survey (2022/23) responses to the statement, 'I plan to use something that I have seen / learnt / discussed today in my own school on our school improvement journey in the short term (i.e. 1-4 weeks' and '...in the long- term (i.e. 3-6 months)'.

Focus group data provided examples of this. One headteacher reflected on how they planned to 'tweak' their school improvement targets, another commented that they intended to alter how they 'meet the needs of SEND', whilst a third said they were moving 'towards getting students involved in different strands of leadership' as a result of new knowledge of teaching practices gained through the programme.

The research design did not enable us to follow-up to see if these intended initiatives were ultimately followed through. As such, further research would be needed to understand Jubilee Networks' long-term impact on school improvement.

4. What effect do Jubilee Networks have on the professional development of school leaders and other members of staff?

Headteachers emphasised the value in creating the time and space for their own professional development, and that Jubilee Networks supported this:

"We don't, well I mean I'm not talking for everybody but I know for myself that I spend a lot of time and focus on developing others and actually because there's an element of leadership, developing leadership for ourselves which we don't always put ourselves first because if there's CPD opportunities it's not always us that take them. (Headteacher)

Many felt that it also benefitted more junior members of staff, particularly as it gave them opportunities to present their work to, and receive feedback from, headteachers outside their immediate network:

“So it was really important for them [junior members of staff] to speak to other headteachers that they didn't know. Are they able to articulate what they do? And then take the questions and equally take them on a tour and show them the work that they've done and get feedback from them about how they might move their work forward.” (Headteacher)

5. What elements of Jubilee Networks work well and what can be improved?

Feedback on visit days and the quality of leadership development was highly positive, seen in the post-event feedback survey data. This showed that 27% of headteachers were satisfied with Jubilee Network events and 73% were very satisfied over the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24 (n=63).

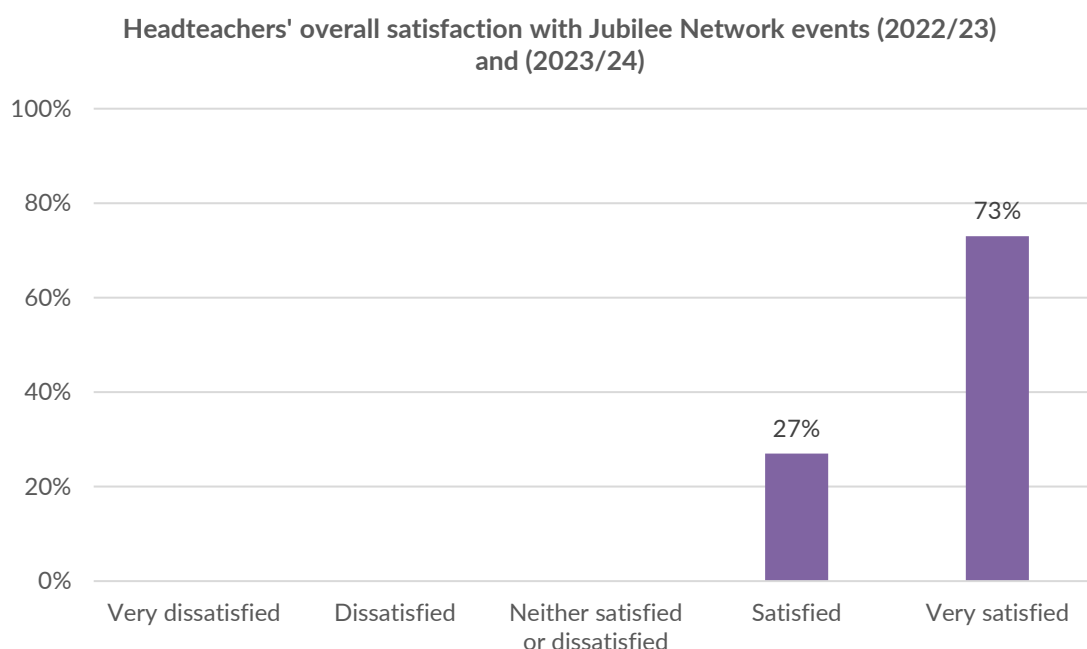


Figure 3: Ratings given by headteachers on their satisfaction with Jubilee Network events for academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24 (n=63)

Most headteachers perceive that the programme is meeting their needs, with 57% strongly agreeing that participation in the Jubilee Network supported their individual aims (n=7). Sample sizes for this endline data are small, so may be influenced by respondent bias. However, this provides some indication that Jubilee Networks are enabling headteachers to learn more about education practice, network with other headteachers and share expertise for school improvement, which was reinforced by the qualitative evidence.

As seen in figure 4 below, the key components of the Jubilee Networks programme were relatively equally valued by participants, suggesting the current mix of programme activities is appropriate and matches the reasons that headteachers joined a Jubilee Network.

Headteachers' responses to 'what went well about today's visit?' (2022/23 and 2023/24)



Figure 4: The 5 most popular headteachers' responses to the statement, 'what went well about today's visit?' from event surveys in academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24. [Total headteachers completing survey (n=64): Total frequency of included responses (f=67)]

Areas for improvement suggested included more opportunities to build professional relationships outside network meetings and more time to discuss live and emergent issues during visits and network meetings.

Headteachers' responses to what could have been better about today's visit?' (2022/23 and 2023/24)

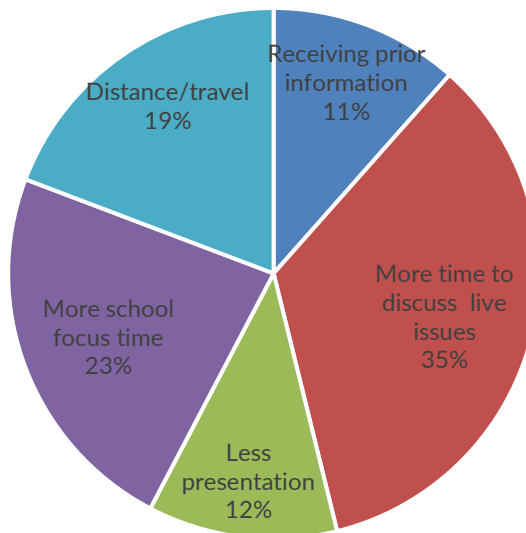


Figure 5: The 5 most popular headteachers' responses to the statement, 'what could have been better about today's visit?' from event surveys in academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Total headteachers completing survey (n=64). Total frequency of included responses (f=26).

4. Recommendations & next steps

There is sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to evidence that Jubilee Networks is a programme that is valued by headteachers and meets their aims for school and personal improvement. There were high levels of satisfaction with the leadership development opportunities provided and the balance of feedback on what works well suggests that the current mixture of programme activities is appropriate. Based on this data, we would not suggest any major changes to the core of the programme model.

One area for potential improvement is the maintenance of peer connections and communication between in-person touchpoints. Resource sharing, use of community forums or other ad-hoc/digital interactions may be areas that could support this more continued engagement. In addition, logistical considerations and the use of time during visits could potentially be reviewed to respond to participant feedback.

4.1 Programme recommendations

- **Sharing more information with attendees prior to visit days** so that headteachers understand more in advance on the host school and the 'live issues' sessions.
- **More time focused on the school community** to give headteachers a better sense of school culture during visits: this could be achieved by extending the learning walk.
- **Less presentation and more discussion** during sessions.
- **Ongoing engagement between in-person touchpoints** so that headteachers feel connected to the network outside visits.
- **Further develop facilitation training for practitioners** to support facilitators with discussion management and group dynamics.

4.2 Evaluation recommendations

To build a stronger design for a future evaluation that could enable more causal claims on impact, Challenge Partners could consider the following:

- **Consistency and precision of survey questions/statements** to increase the effectiveness of the survey tools.
- **Increase the survey completion rate:** embedding surveys into events or other programme milestones would be key to this.
- **Pre-post survey identifiers** to enable the evaluation to make longitudinal claims.
- **Capture additional information on surveys** so that differences between 'new/early' and 'established/sustained' network participants can be made.
- **Create or review a Theory of Change** to help further define the proposed outcomes for the programme, enabling more robust measurement and increase the claims that could be made from findings.
- **Develop further qualitative research questions** to ensure the full breadth of headteachers' experiences are captured, particularly in relation to any areas where the quantitative evidence is more limited.



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Get in touch

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