

Leadership Academy impact survey 2018-19

December 2019



Acknowledgements

The Local Government Association (LGA) Research and Information Team would like to thank all the participants who took part in this research.

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Summary

In December 2019, the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information team conducted a survey of councillors who had attended the LGA's Leadership Academy in 2018/19, in order to get feedback on the lasting impact of the course. The results will be used to develop the programme to ensure that it best meets councillors' needs.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 131 councillors who had completed the Leadership Academy approximately six months previously. A total of 40 councillors submitted a completed survey – a response rate of 31 per cent. This level of response means that these results should be taken as a snapshot of the views of this group of respondents, rather than representative of all councillors who attended the Leadership Academy.

Key messages

The results show that, six months after completion, the Leadership Academy had improved the ability of most councillors to carry out their role. Further, it had positively impacted on their career progression – with many councillors saying the Leadership Academy had helped them to progress to a new role or to take on a new roles or responsibilities.

Results

- **Improving ability to carry out role:** Nearly all, 95 per cent (38 respondents) said that their participation in the Leadership Academy had helped to improve the way they carry out their role, to a great or moderate extent.
- **Career progression:** Over half of respondents, 58 per cent (23 respondents) said they had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities since attending the course.
- **Positive impact to progress:** Of those who had progressed or taken on a new role or responsibilities, most (91 per cent – 21 respondents) said their participation in the Leadership Academy had had a great or moderate positive impact on their ability to do so.

Introduction

In December 2019, the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information team conducted a survey of councillors who had completed the LGA's Leadership Academy six months previously, in order to get feedback on the lasting impact of the course. The results will be used to develop the programme to ensure that it best meets councillors' needs.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 131 councillors who participated in the LGA's Leadership Academy in 2018/19, approximately six months after completing the programme. The survey was in the field between 17 December 2019 and 17 January 2020. A total of 40 councillors submitted a completed survey – a response rate of 31 per cent.

This level of response means that these results should be taken as a snapshot of the views of this group of respondents, rather than representative of all councillors who attended the Leadership Academy.

Please note the following when reading the report:

- Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the number who answered each question. Please note that bases vary throughout the survey.
- Throughout the report, percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.
- Where the response base is less than 50, care should be taken when interpreting percentages, as small differences can seem magnified. Therefore, where this is the case in this report, absolute numbers are reported alongside the percentage values.

Leadership Academy impact survey

This section provides full results for each survey question.

All respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, they thought that participating in the Leadership Academy had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role. Nearly all respondents (95 per cent, 38 councillors) said the Academy had helped to either a great or moderate extent.

Table 1: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?

	Number	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	38	95
To a great extent	23	58
To a moderate extent	15	38
To a small extent	2	5
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents (40)

All respondents were asked if they had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities since participating in the Leadership Academy. Over half (58 per cent, 23 respondents) said that this was the case, whilst 38 per cent (15 respondents) planned to maintain their current role and responsibilities for now.

Table 2: Since participating in the Leadership Academy have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?

	Number	Per cent
Yes	23	58
No – but I expect to soon	1	3
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	15	38
Don't know	0	0
Not applicable	1	3

Base: all respondents (40)

Those respondents who said that they had taken on a new role or had taken on additional roles and responsibilities were asked to what extent, if at all, they thought that participating in the Leadership Academy had had a positive impact on their ability to do so. Nearly all respondents (91 per cent, 21 councillors) said that this was the case to either a great or moderate extent.

Table 3: To what extent, if at all do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy had a positive impact on your ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities?

	Number	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	21	91
To a great extent	10	43
To a moderate extent	11	48
To a small extent	2	9
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents who had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities (23)

Respondents who said the Leadership Academy had positively impacted on the way they carried out their role, either to a great or moderate extent, were asked to provide examples to illustrate this – as were those who said it had positively impacted on their ability to progress to or take on new roles or responsibilities. Thirty six respondents gave feedback. The themes were:

Confidence: Some respondents reported feeling more confident in their leadership roles as a result of the programme. This included having the confidence to lead conversations, make decisions, see oneself as an equal partner in discussions and take on higher roles.

“[Leadership Academy] provided the right environment to reflect and to learn from other councillors. Facilitators were very experienced in the field of local government and were very enthusiastic and enabling. Gave me extra confidence to apply for a board role which I was successful in being appointed.” Independent Councillor

“I have confidence to drive forward the political agenda in my portfolio and taken decisions that I would have previously lacked confidence in. I am more challenging when discussing performance and budgets which has led to positive outcomes from the portfolio – particularly in relation to public reputation and strategic direction. I no longer have imposter syndrome (in this anyway).” Labour Councillor

Collaborative working: Some respondents said the Leadership Academy had enhanced their collaborative leadership skills and ability to build consensus. This included working with increased empathy, openness and thoughtfulness.

“The course not only gave me confidence but encouraged me to think about all the different personalities involved in decision making. I am new to local government having been in the NHS for many years it is very different. We need to politically lead and getting the balance right is crucial and the course boosted my confidence to help me work in this way.” Labour Councillor

“The Academy course has helped me to understand other people and how to approach subjects differently with differing personalities...”
Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

“Work in partnership, more positive engagement with ruling group and Cabinet Members in developing a conciliatory way forward in regards team [name of authority].” Independent Councillor

Strategic approach: Several respondents gave details of how the Leadership Academy had enhanced their ability to thinking strategically and ask tougher questions.

“My engagement is much more considered. I think along corporate lines and look to effectively engage at every opportunity appreciative of the differing styles and their potential outcomes.” Conservative Councillor

“It helped me to focus on the ‘big picture’, what we are trying to achieve to improve the lives of our citizens. In chairing scrutiny committee meetings, I try to keep the focus on how we can make a positive difference. In my ward work, I am more aware of the need to engage with the wider community, not just those who ask for help.” Plaid Cymru Councillor

Leadership skills: A range of comments were made about the impact of the Leadership Academy on respondents’ people skills (e.g. managing relationships and conflict).

“I found that it helped me think more strategically about policy areas. It also very usefully built my capacity to manage complex relationships and conflict with a range of both internal and external stakeholders. As a result, I believe that it has increased my overall confidence to carry out my duties and to do this more effectively.” Plaid Cymru Councillor

“I have had the confidence to create a clear vision for the Health and Adult Social care scrutiny panel, lead conversations with CEOs of health care providers and achieve results. I have been able to unleash the ability of each person on the panel to improve performance and participation of the members.” Labour Councillor

Progression: Some respondents mentioned their career progression, such as taking on Board positions or larger portfolios, which they credited to the Leadership Academy.

“Without having undergone the Leadership Academy I would not have been considered for the role of Leader of the Council.” Conservative Councillor

“This course was fundamental in giving me the skills to become a senior member of my Cabinet before becoming a Member of Parliament. I cannot understate the importance of this course and would strongly recommend attending.” Conservative Councillor

Self-reflection: Some respondents commented on the self-reflective aspect of the Leadership Academy, which had given insights into their own leadership style.

“More than anything it made me understand my leadership style is ‘enough’ and ‘ok’ which in turn increased my confidence...” Labour Councillor

“The Leadership Academy has helped in understanding who I am and my approach. The academy showed me how to listen and not always to just jump in...Being open minded and developing a general overview approach has helped...” Conservative Councillor

“How my personality and work approach can affect others and how I can utilise it more effectively.” Independent Councillor

Further comments

Twenty three respondents gave further comments about their experience of the Leadership Academy, as outlined below:

- **General praise:** Comments were given about the programme in general (e.g. it was ‘invaluable’, ‘amazing’ or ‘brilliant’) or those who ran it (e.g. the staff/tutors were ‘inspiring’, ‘excellent’ or ‘inspirational’).
- **Peer-group mixing:** Comments were given about the value of mixing with one’s peers and learning from each other in a safe environment.
- **Cross-party mixing:** Comments were given about the strength of support received from councillors from all political backgrounds.
- **Practical tools:** Comments were given about the benefits of take-away information and tools that respondents had later used to support their roles.
- **Advocacy:** Comments were given about the invaluable nature of the programme for councillors in leadership roles, with some saying they would highly recommend the experience to others.
- **Uncovered skills:** A comment was made about the way in which the programme had uncovered hidden leadership skills, enabling the respondent to lead using their own style.

Some comments focused on potential improvements:

- **Follow-up sessions:** Comments were made about the value of offering post-Academy follow-up events.
- **Smaller groups:** A comment was made about the potential advantages of running the programme with a smaller number of councillors.
- **Regional balance:** A comment was made about either strengthening the regional mix of councillors or not mixing at all (specifically in the context of English and Welsh councils).
- **Post-Academy support:** A mix of comments were made about the best way for councillors to continue supporting each other post-Academy (e.g. one had not benefited from a WhatsApp group, while others had).
- **Expand the reach:** A comment was made about the benefits that could be realised by enhancing links between the Leadership Academy and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- **Learning environment:** Comments were made about the value of creating an appropriate learning environment that could respond to different learning styles.

Annex A: Questionnaire

1. To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?

To a great extent
To a moderate extent
To a small extent
Not at all
Don't know

To those who answered not at all to Q1:

2. Why do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has not helped you improve the way you carry out your role? If you have any suggestions as to how the programme could be improved or developed to help with this, please use the space below.
3. Since participating in the Leadership Academy have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?

Yes
No – but I expect to soon
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now
Don't know
Not applicable

If yes:

4. To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy had a positive impact on your ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities?

To a great extent
To a moderate extent
To a small extent
Not at all
Don't know

To those who answered a great or moderate extent to Q1 or Q4:

5. Please provide brief details of how the Leadership Academy has helped you improve or progress in your role, including examples of things that you have done differently as a result.
6. If you have any further comments about the Leadership Academy, please use the space below.



Local Government Association
18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Email info@local.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk

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