

# Leadership Essentials impact survey 2018-19

A survey of delegates



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## Acknowledgements

The Local Government Association (LGA) Research and Information team would like to thank all the councillors who took part in this survey.

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## Summary

The Local Government Association's (LGA's) 'Leadership Essentials' is a series of events designed as themed learning opportunities for councillors. Each event concentrates on a specific portfolio area, such as planning or children's services, or a specific theme, such as communications or digital leadership. This report presents the findings from an impact survey sent to two groups of respondents who had attended a Leadership Essentials course.

## Methodology

All Leadership Essentials delegates were invited to complete an impact survey several months after the end of their course (see Annex A). Of the 397 delegates who received a survey, 121 responded (a response rate of 30 per cent). The survey was sent out in two rounds: 116 councillors received a survey in February 2019 (35 responded) and 281 received a survey in August 2019 (86 responded).

## Key messages

Most respondents who attended Leadership Essentials in 2018/19 said it had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role. More than a quarter of respondents said they had progressed to a new role – or had taken on additional roles or responsibilities – since attending their respective course. The main ways Leadership Essentials had helped councillors to improve or progress in their role were said to be 'increased understanding and knowledge', 'networking and sharing experience and good practice', 'confidence building', 'scrutiny and challenge' and 'communication skills'.

## Results

- Nine out of ten respondents (90 per cent) who attended Leadership Essentials in 2018/19 said it had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role to a great or moderate extent.
- More than a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) said they had progressed to a new role – or had taken on additional roles or responsibilities – since attending their respective course.
- Responding to an open question about how Leadership Essentials had helped councillors to improve or progress in their role, the main themes discussed were 'increased understanding and knowledge', 'networking and sharing experience and good practice', 'confidence building', 'scrutiny and challenge' and 'communication skills'.

## Introduction

The Local Government Association's (LGA's) 'Leadership Essentials' is a series of events designed as themed learning opportunities for councillors. Each event concentrates on a specific portfolio area, such as planning or children's services, or a specific theme, such as communications or digital leadership. An impact survey was sent to all delegates to help the LGA ensure that its future leadership training best meets the needs of councillors. This report presents the findings from delegates who took part in at least one of 16 Leadership Essentials courses during 2018/19.

## Methodology

All Leadership Essentials delegates were invited to complete an online survey several months after the end of their course (see Annex A). The survey contained a small number of questions looking at the extent to which attending Leadership Essentials has had a lasting impact on participants. The survey was sent out in two rounds:

- **February 2019:** A survey was sent by email to 116 councillors who had attended a Leadership Essentials course between April and September 2018. A total of 35 replied – a response rate of 30 per cent.
- **September 2019:** A survey was sent by email to 281 councillors who had attended a Leadership Essentials course between October 2018 and March 2019. A total of 86 replied – a response rate of 31 per cent.

Overall, of the 397 delegates who received a survey, 121 responded (a response rate of 30 per cent). This level of response rate means that these results should not be taken to be more widely representative of the views of all councils. Rather, they are a snapshot of the views of this particular group of respondents.

The results presented in this report have been aggregated, and no individuals or authorities are identified in this report. Where tables and figures report the base, the description in brackets refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the number of respondents who answered each question. Where sample sizes total less than 50, absolute numbers are reported alongside percentage values.

# Leadership Essentials Impact Survey 2018-19

This section provides full results for each survey question.

## Impact on performance in role

All respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, they thought attending their respective Leadership Essentials courses had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role. Most respondents (90 per cent) said that it had helped to either a great or moderate extent (see Table 1).

**Table 1: To what extent, if at all, do you think that attending the Leadership Essentials course has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?**

	Per cent
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>90</b>
To a great extent	50
To a moderate extent	40
To a small extent	8
Not at all	2
Don't know	0

Base: (all respondents) 121

Those who answered 'not at all' to the above question were asked why they thought that participation in Leadership Essentials had not helped them improve the way they carry out their role. They were also asked to provide any suggestions as to how the programme could be improved or developed to help with this. Two responses were received and these are provided below:

*“As a district council although we are responsible for leisure we have access to few funds. This was one of the reasons I attended but it was mostly pitched at county and unitary councils who have bigger budgets and responsibilities.”*

*Leadership Essentials, Sport*

*“The very small number of planning applications we have, and the type of issue we deal with in an area with many heritage assets, was not really part of the course.”*

*Leadership Essentials, Planning Decision Making*

## Notable progress

All respondents were asked if they had progressed to a new role or had taken on additional roles or responsibilities since attending the Leadership Essentials course.



Twenty-seven per cent said that they had and eight per cent said that they expected to soon. Fifty seven per cent of respondents planned to maintain their current role and responsibilities for now. See Table 2.

<b>Table 2: Since attending the Leadership Essentials course have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?</b>	
	<b>Per cent</b>
Yes	27
No – but I expect to soon	8
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	57
Don't know	2
Not applicable	6

Base: (all respondents) 121

Those respondents who had progressed to a new role, or taken on additional roles or responsibilities, were asked if they thought that their participation in the Leadership Essentials course had had a positive impact on their ability to achieve this. Eighty five per cent of respondents (28 delegates) said that this was the case to either a great or moderate extent. See Table 3.

<b>Table 3: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Essentials course had a positive impact on your ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>85</b>
To a great extent	16	48
To a moderate extent	12	36
To a small extent	4	12
Not at all	1	3
Don't know	0	0

Base: (all respondents who had progressed to a new role, or taken on additional roles or responsibilities) 33

### Examples of progress

Respondents who selected 'to a great extent' or 'to a moderate extent' when asked a) if attending Leadership Essentials had helped them improve the way they carried out their role and/or b) that their participation in Leadership Essentials had had a positive impact on their ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities were asked to provide brief details of how the programme had helped

them improve or progress in their role. A total of 102 responses were received. A summary of the main themes is provided below.

**Increased understanding and knowledge:** About a third of respondents said the Leadership Essentials programme had helped to improve their knowledge of local government and had also provided insight into specific aspects such as finance and health. Some said that they had developed a better understanding of their own role and also of specific relevant issues. For example:

“Helped me to understand the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and wider health systems, and my role as Chair.”

Leadership Essentials, Health and Wellbeing

“...There were many aspects of the course which helped me to understand how to develop my role.”

Leadership Essentials, Children’s Services Programme

“It gave me a greater understanding of the issues involved, particularly at a national level.”

Leadership Essentials, Fire and Rescue

**Networking and sharing experience and good practice:** About a fifth of respondents said that the opportunity to network with colleagues from other authorities, share experiences, exchange ideas and discuss different approaches was helpful. The provision of good practice examples was also described as beneficial.

“As a new councillor it was really helpful to hear experiences of both the other attendees and the presenters.”

Leadership Essentials, Finance

“It’s easy to operate within a ‘bubble’ and see your authority as the only way to operate. Information from the course and interaction with others from fire authorities all over the UK opened my eyes to different practice some good, some bad but all valuable as a learning experience.”

Leadership Essentials, Fire and Rescue

“Great opportunity to confirm best practice and network the approach of other similar local authorities.”

Leadership Essentials, Finance

**Building confidence:** About a fifth of respondents said that they had developed more confidence as a result of attending the course. This included improved

confidence in the way they were carrying out their role, developing the confidence to ask questions and gaining a greater level of self-belief.

“When I took the course, I was very new in role, and the course helped to accelerate my confidence to provide some leadership.”

Leadership Essentials, Health and Wellbeing

“The course has given me the confidence to ask more in-depth questions of officers and understand the roles of officers outside partners and structures.”

Leadership Essentials Children’s Services Programme

**Scrutiny and challenge:** A small number of respondents said that they had learned more about scrutiny and had developed their ability to challenge and ask questions as a result of the course.

“The course has helped me to challenge more, ask the what, how, why, where and when questions more often”.

Leadership Essentials, Health and Wellbeing

“The programme boosted my confidence at asking questions and follow up questions. It also gave me significant additional information on the role of scrutiny.”

Leadership Essentials, Effective Scrutiny

**Communication skills:** A small number of respondents said that their course had helped them with their communication skills. This included considering the way they engaged with the press, their use of social media and structuring statements and speeches whilst ensuring their relevance for different audiences. Some also mentioned that they had gained confidence in public speaking as a result of exploring these skills and techniques.

“I have looked at and changed the way that I communicate through social media. I have also considered how to change my communication style depending on the audience.”

Leadership Essentials, Getting Your Message Across

“It’s helped me to shape how I structure my statements/speeches and answer questions, whilst being more aware of the language I use.”

Leadership Essentials, Working with the Media

## Further comments

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments about the Leadership Essentials course that they attended. A total of 69 responses were received. A summary of the main themes is provided below:

**Positive experience:** Many respondents described their course positively and mentioned the knowledge and experience that they had gained as a result of attending and said that they would recommend others to participate in the future. For example,

“These are well worth attending, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the room. The chance to question is really appreciated.”

Leadership Essentials, West Midlands Children Services Event

“All of the Leadership courses I have attended have been outstanding and I would and do recommend them to my colleagues.”

Leadership Essentials, Working with the Media

**Networking:** Some respondents had benefitted from the networking opportunities on their course, adding that this aspect was interesting and informative and provided a good chance to exchange opinions and experiences:

“Enjoyed meeting councillors from other parties and authorities.”

Leadership Essentials, Effective Scrutiny

“Networking and learning from others is perhaps the most useful part.”

Leadership Essentials, Effective Scrutiny

**Speakers:** A few respondents spoke highly of the course speakers and facilitators, describing them as motivational and knowledgeable:

“All the speakers were excellent and the variety of their backgrounds and experience was helpful.”

Leadership Essentials, Finance

**Venue and organisation:** A few respondents praised the venue and described the course as well run.

“Excellent venue very well organised and totally worthwhile in every respect.”

Leadership Essentials, Children’s Services Programme

A small number of respondents made suggestions for improvements or raised issues they had experienced on the course. These points are summarised below:

- Clearer focus on lead member role within scrutiny function (Leadership Essentials, Children's Services Programme).
- More control of dominating audience members (Leadership Essentials, Effective Scrutiny).
- More inclusive of new councillors (Leadership Essentials, Adult Social Care).
- More time for longer discussion (Leadership Essentials, Leadership and Prevent).
- More practical tips on speech writing and achieving get quick responses to questions (Leadership Essentials, Getting Your Message Across).
- More technical detail (Leadership Essentials, Finance).
- More dedicated time for leaders (not deputies or shadows) in order to share experiences of demands of the leadership role (Leadership Essentials, Children's Services Programme)
- Inclusion of 'failed' case studies to understand what does not work well (Leadership Essentials, Sport).
- More consideration of timings for speakers and Q&A (Leadership Essentials, Fire and Rescue).
- More consideration of heritage assets (Leadership Essentials, Planning Decision Making).

## Annex A: Questionnaire

Q1) Please enter your details below:	
Name	
Role	
Council	

Q2) To what extent, if at all, do you think that attending the Leadership Essentials course has helped you to improve the way you carry out your role?	
	Please tick
To a great extent	
To a moderate extent	
To a small extent	
Not at all	
Don't know	

Q3) If you answered 'not at all' to Q2: Why do you think that participation in Leadership Essentials 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.

Q4) Since attending the Leadership Essentials course have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?	
	Please tick
Yes	
No – but I expect to soon	
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	
Don't know	
Not applicable	

**Q5) If you answered 'yes' to Q4:**

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

	<b>Please tick</b>
To a great extent	
To a moderate extent	
To a small extent	
Not at all	
Don't know	

**Q6) If you answered 'a great' or 'moderate extent' to Q2 or Q5:**

Please provide brief details of how the Leadership Essentials course has helped you improve or progress in your role, including examples of things that you have done differently as a result.

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**Q7) If you have any further comments about the Leadership Essentials course you attended, please use the space below.**

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